

ANTOINETTE



M. P. BLYTH.



ANTOINETTE.

A Tale of the Ancien Régime.

BY

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IN TWO VOLUMES.

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Part III.

LIFE AT VERSAILLES

(CONTINUED).






ANTOINETTE.



CHAPTER XXIX.

VERY day that passed now brought its quota of anxiety, vexation, or difficulty, and the 5th of May was at hand, when the Assembly of the States-General—convened by the King, against wise counsel, but in deference to the opinion of men whose judgment he preferred—would take place ; and preparations were in progress which should, at all events, make the ceremony imposing to the utmost.

It is not our province to reproduce

history, or to enter into the sad details of that fated day, when the great Monarchy of France, clothed, as if to accentuate the occasion, in all the blaze of its traditional splendour, moved the first step forward to the edge of that abyss which was to be its grave. On that day, for the last time, the King and Queen, surrounded by all that was splendid in the most magnificent Court in Europe, arrayed themselves to meet the estates of the realm. With them were the princes of the blood royal, nobles, guards, equerries, pages, lords and ladies in attendance, all in their full numbers, and regarding the manner of whose service, down to the minutest detail of dress and decoration, the strictest etiquette was laid down. These, each in his appointed place, waited to swell the train of the sovereigns within the palace. Without, the stir and pomp of troops, carriages, and mounted horsemen hurrying up and down the road from Paris to Versailles, the blare of trumpets, and the

sound of military music. The people, with the increased democratic element, and, lower than that, its sans culotte scum rising to the surface here and there, were thronging also to Versailles; ever greedy of shows and pageants, whilst viewing them now with eyes evil and vindictive, hating those round whom this splendour was gathered; hungry to rend, and tear, and destroy, quite as much as to behold.

On this day the King of France—filled with a generous anxiety to do well by his people, at any sacrifice to himself, ever puzzling over the mode, unable to take the lead, lacking perception of the crisis, or the energy to seize and make it his own—yet hoped that his ‘faithful advisers’ might solve the difficulty for him. The Queen, full of fire, full of energy, but neither in her way able to stem the tide. Ah, how those who loved her best burned with indignation and trembled with sorrow for her sake this day! For even as she walked forth beside

the King, surrounded by all the chivalry and majesty of France, evil reached her. A detachment of poissardes worked their way close to her very path, and loudly muttered, with threatening voices, as she passed, ‘Orléans ! Orléans ! Vive Orléans !’ The same hated, dreaded name which in the groves of Trianon had assailed her ear. It was too much ; even her brave spirit for the instant quailed before such audacity, such persecution. A deadly faintness came over her, the colour faded from her lips, her proud head bent as if before a storm ; for an instant it seemed as if she must have fallen. But, true to her royal blood, to herself, and to the exigences of the hour, she recovered herself with an infinite effort of will ; and again the colour flew to her cheeks and brow, the light rekindled in her eyes. What wonder if, with the reaction, came indignation at the insult ; or that in nerving herself to endure whatever might yet be in store for her that day, she felt to

her heart's core that she had tasted the first drop of a bitter cup, which she was becoming conscious that she must drain to the dregs!

Of the scene within the great Salle des Menus, and of its consequences on the future, history gives us ample details. For our share, we may describe an incident which befell during the State reception held within the palace afterwards by the sovereigns, at which the representatives of foreign Courts were received, and all the ceremonies of regal magnificence observed in their highest pomp—for the last time.

Antoinette de Boisfontaine, who had been in the circle of the Queen's ladies during the day, was standing now within one of the doors of the reception-room, watching the gay scene with all the interest of a spectator, and noticing how the buzz of conversation, beginning faintly near the sovereigns, swelled and increased like the hum of a hive as it reached the outer range of the throng. The Court that day was so

large, and the number of foreigners and ambassadors so great, that Toinette, from where she stood, could only see the plumes in the Queen's head-dress, as she moved slowly within a small space. She could not see the King, and it seemed a useless endeavour to seek for faces which she knew among the crowd, now approaching the royal circle, now moving away from it, now dispersing through the salons, and again returning like moths to the light, to see and admire the Queen.

Yet once the crowd divided, and for one moment Antoinette saw perfectly the object of so much passionate devotion, and of such bitter hatred. She remembered that glimpse until her dying day.

She saw the Queen dressed in her royal attire—the petticoat and hoop of white satin, the long train held by pages of her household in their brilliant State dresses; the stomacher of her gown blazing with diamonds—diamonds of extraordinary size

and brilliance in her ears, wearing the pearl necklace given by Anne of Austria to the Queen of France, and the head-dress of plumes and diamonds (amongst which gleamed the Sanci) which suited her proud carriage so well. She stood a little in advance of her ladies, a splendid, glistening figure. Then the intervening crowd closed round her again, and Toinette saw her no more. As she still watched, hoping to see the grand and beautiful figure again, and bending forward with her soul in her eyes, standing on tip-toe by the doorway, a voice close to her said :

‘ Mademoiselle de Boisfontaine — Antoinette ! I have found you at last !’

Startled, she turned, her heart beating with a sudden bound of surprise and pleasure. A face she knew well—the first she from habit was wont to think of in any time of need, but the last she had dreamed of seeing there—met her wondering gaze. It was the face of Geoffrey Leigh. He

had come to the British Embassy as a guest of his relative the ambassador, and in time to be present at that memorable reception.

‘Geoffrey!’ she exclaimed, her whole face brightening as she knew him; ‘you have come, then, as you said?’

‘As I said. And you?’

‘I believed that you would come some day. But I thought——’

‘You thought—what?’ said Geoffrey, watching her blushing face, and thinking how beautiful she was, and what a complete change had come over Antoinette in the past year. ‘Not that I had forgotten?’

‘No—never. Not that,’ she answered simply. ‘But strange things seem to happen now. Nothing is safe, nothing sure, in these days. The times are evil and perilous. And, Geoffrey, I thought you might come—too late.’

Her voice sank with a mournful cadence, ill-accordant with the brilliant scene before them.

‘Too late ! How ? What is to happen ?’

‘We cannot tell,’ she said, sighing ; ‘we cannot see before us—we——’

‘Well,’ rejoined Geoffrey, ‘I have come to see you—and Paris. Do not look sad, Toinette. I am come determined to enjoy myself, and I want you to do the same. I have brought a packet from home for you amongst my mails. This grandeur and ceremony is very magnificent, but a little oppressive to the uninitiated. I have just been presented, however, and I would not have missed it for worlds. How beautiful the Queen is ! I am her sworn knight from this day forward !’ said Geoffrey, with enthusiasm. ‘Why, even Whitworth did not do her justice—I used to think he merely raved. But she really is grand ! She is divine !’

Antoinette smiled a sort of indulgent smile, well pleased at his ardour, and quite approving of it.

‘Are you always wandering here like a

lost Pleiad? If so, I shall never find you in this great palace, Antoinette. I shall be always tumbling over some grand stick-in-waiting, or half a dozen nobles of the guard royal, or a detachment of Court pages (of whom there appears to be a legion—red, green, and blue), and then going round the sentries to find the way in or out. Do you live here? or where?’

‘I live,’ said Toinette, ‘in my father’s house, which is near the great entrance. And, Geoffrey, you will find my father and my mother and myself at home to-morrow after noontime. See, the Queen goes! Good-night, and welcome to France.’

‘Au revoir. Je vous——’

‘Say it in the dear English tongue,’ she said, withholding her hand with a little wilful gesture.

‘Good-night, then. Good-night, and good-bye until to-morrow.’



CHAPTER XXX.

THE next few weeks passed quickly by. Geoffrey was received on the happiest terms into the family, with whom, by marriage at least, he claimed kindred, and in whose midst she dwelt who had been so long the chief joy of his boyhood and young life at Leigh. True, he had been reminded in set terms, and with due formality, of the betrothal of Antoinette to the Marquis de Vezécque ; he had, in some dim shadowy sort of way, known it always. But the Marquis was out of sight, and out of France ; and there was nothing to impress him upon Geoffrey as a real personage. To him this

unwelcome news came only as a dream. He put it away, and resolved to have no spectre at his elbow to mar the happy present. Every day he joined them at one meal or other; and often Toinette was there, but not always. For a double attraction drew her to the palace—her mother's frequent presence there, and the Queen's kindness.

One day, when Geoffrey was announced, Toinette was waiting for him with great eagerness, and beckoned him forward into the room which she called her boudoir, where, with her books, her embroidery, and her flowers, she spent her mornings often alone.

‘Geoffrey,’ she said, ‘there is quite a budget of news for you to-day. First, here is a letter for you from dear Aunt Marguerite, enclosed to my father. Then I must tell you that we are going to Boisfontaine for a few days. Will you come? We want you to see the demesne.’

She asked him in that low, sweet voice

which Geoffrey thought would have wiled him into the desert of Sahara, or into an enemy's camp through a chevaux-de-frise.

‘If my uncle, Monsieur le Marquis, will invite me,’ he said, smiling as he uttered the words.

‘Monsieur de Ségur is with him just now—the deputy from the noblesse to the States-General, and a great personage—so he has to be duly interviewed on the King's affairs. I hope he will not bring forward any pressing claims on my dear father's time. He is sadly harassed just now.’

‘You are quite a politician and a Court lady, and acquainted with all the notabilities, Toinette.’

‘Never mind. Look at my flowers. You see, I try to have them exactly as we used to do at Leigh.’

‘Yes. How you and my mother used to loiter over them! The dear old Vicar looks at those stands whenever he comes to the house, and then looks away and sighs.

He says they remind him of you, Toinette, and that nothing thrives in them as it used to do. As to Miss Wilkins, she weeps bucketfuls over your memory, and is always either wrapt in ecstasy at some good omen on your account, or in woe about some dream or vision regarding either you or my mother.'

'It was Aunt Marguerite who taught me to love gardening,' she said, smiling. 'But most French girls are born with a love of flowers. I have so often pitied Mesdames, the King's aunts. They do so delight in flowers. But it was not for them to be allowed to condescend to such sweet and busy toil. In the trim parterres here, or anywhere, until the King gave them Bellevue, there could be no garden work for Mesdames.'

'Why not? I thought that one good of being a princess was that you might do anything you liked.'

'Not in their case, at least. They live,

and have always lived, by rule of etiquette, rigid, wearisome, monotonous. From my point of view,' said Toinette, with a somewhat grave smile, 'I wonder that they survived to grow up at all.'

'One of them did rebel, I have heard.'

'Ah, no ; not rebel, Geoffrey. It was two years before the late King would hear of it, and consent to her becoming a religieuse.'

'Very wise of him. Have you seen her?' said Geoffrey, not much interested, but talking for Toinette's sake, or whatever interested her.

'Never ; but my mother has, often, when the Queen goes to see her at the grille. She is ugly——'

'Yes ; that, of course,' said Geoffrey, with a mischievous smile ; 'and deformed, I believe ?'

'But good as an angel. Some of the great ladies here asked her what she thought the worst of all the dreadful things she had

to do—what she disliked most and found the hardest? It was neither more nor less than going downstairs!

‘Going downstairs! Why, she need not have become a nun to practise that, I fancy. May not princesses walk, then?’

‘To her it was terrible. You must figure to yourself that every day she had her attendants. At Versailles she might never stir alone. If she went down the great staircase, it was on the arm of her gentleman equerry. If she was tired, she was carried up or down; and the whole place blazed with light night and day. But the convent stairs were dark, and cold and narrow—to her like a precipice. She used to sit down on every step, and put her foot on the one below it; and the day she could walk down that dark staircase, on her own feet, like other people, she cried for joy, as at a great victory. She told no one. She fought it all out alone. She was brave and noble of heart, this poor Princess Louise, notwith-

standing her plain face and misshapen form ! Ah ! she is gone now, where trouble cannot reach her any more !

‘ Now, Toinette,’ said Geoffrey, in a grudging tone, ‘ no more talk about convents and nuns, if you please. You know you would have done as much, and so might she, poor thing, outside the grille, as behind it.’

‘ I know not,’ she said. ‘ But—yes—for my mother I could be brave. We cannot tell—we !’

In the midst of their conversation a valet brought a message to the effect that Monsieur le Marquis particularly desired to speak with Mr. Leigh on important business.

To say truth, Geoffrey stood somewhat in awe—as did most people—of the actual presence of the Marquis, whom he had as yet seen chiefly amongst a circle of friends, or engaged in the duties and affairs of State, surrounded by a certain amount of state himself, and suited admirably to his sur-

roundings. It must also be owned that he felt a little more anxious than curious. Could the Marquis, who had with so much ceremony announced the approaching marriage of his daughter, be about to say that the intimacy of these past weeks must cease to wear that aspect of pleasant familiarity which had made it so delightful hitherto? Was he about to receive an injunction to come less openly, or less frequently, into her sweet society? It was Geoffrey's 'inner consciousness,' doubtless, which suggested this very unpleasant idea. In truth, he need not have been afraid. Antoinette de Boisfontaine was Madame de Vezécque in all calculations of the Marquis, to whom 'love' and 'romance' were words absolutely meaningless outside the pages of such books as the 'Grand Cyrus' and other fictions which were in vogue when he was young. Was he about to hear of some of those State troubles with which domestic and personal misfortune were already beginning

to be intermingled? Could it be of the Vicomte de Salis that his father would speak? Geoffrey knew enough to guess what sorrow must be linked with that name. Or it might be to give him that invitation to Boisfontaine of which Antoinette had already spoken? So questioning, he was ushered into the presence of his relative.

‘Let no one interrupt us,’ said the Marquis to his valet.

This also had a serious sound; and the voice of the speaker was serious, too. Then, turning to Geoffrey, he said:

‘Be seated, my nephew. I am at the present moment in a sea of difficulty.’ The Marquis looked full into the young man’s handsome face, so radiant with energy and life. ‘I am just now overwhelmed with correspondence, a portion of which is English. I want an English secretary, one whom I can entirely trust. One who, after remaining here for a short time, to execute

with me somewhat of the immediate pressure of the work, would undertake, and be capable of undertaking—*capable*, I say—of undertaking a still greater trust : namely, a secret mission to England.’

As he spoke, the Marquis fixed on Geoffrey the clear gray eyes, so anxious and so inquiring, which the young man felt would have pierced him to the very soul, like Ithuriel’s spear, had he been capable of harbouring a wrong or a dishonest thought.

‘In fact,’ continued the Marquis, lowering his voice impressively, ‘the mission you would be entrusted with would be to the Prime Minister himself. It would consist of a communication from a very exalted personage here, and be apart from ambassadorial interchange of terms or proposals. You would convey a letter, and bring back the answer. My duty is to propose this to you. It is open to you to accept or to refuse.’

A silence followed this startling announcement. Geoffrey Leigh felt his heart beat

loud and fast. What a prospect was here laid before him ! Confidential employment in his kinsman's house—a position to him the most enviable—and a mission of importance, which would bring him name and fame in his own country ! His open face, his frank, alert, and spirited air, assured the Marquis that he had not been mistaken in his choice.

‘ You are, as I understand, a visitor in Paris ! Not in employment with your ambassador ? ’

‘ No, sir. I am here chiefly to give myself the pleasure to become acquainted with yourself, with Madame la Marquise, my mother's half-sister, and to renew that acquaintance with my cousin, Mademoiselle de Boisfontaine, for whom everyone at my home entertains a remembrance the most charming.’

Geoffrey felt an uncomfortable tendency to a heightening of the complexion as he said these words.

‘Just so,’ said the Marquis, waving his hand. ‘On my part, before broaching this subject to you, I have heard from my lord, your ambassador, the very estimable character of my old friend Sir Geoffrey Leigh’s son. He commended you to my regard as a *preux chevalier*, and as being of integrity the most perfect. Ah,’ said the Marquis with a frown, which drew his black eyebrows together, and clouded his eyes with an expression of bitter pain, ‘had my son been thus—— But enough! I shall give you my confidence, full and entire, *monsieur* my nephew. In return, I ask you to pledge yourself to silence and secrecy.’

‘Sir,’ said Geoffrey, ‘you overwhelm me with your goodness. I am young for such a trust, and I am profoundly sensible that you do me greater honour than I deserve. But I will serve you with devotion, and keep the trust you propose to confer upon me with my life!’

‘Alas!’ said the Marquis, with a melan-

choly smile at the young man's eagerness, and sighing deeply as he spoke, 'you are all fire, all ardour, like the young! I could find it in me to say, Keep, then, your liberty, and do not burthen yourself with this work, which may well, in these times, cost you dearer than you know. Nevertheless, it must be that I accept you. And you must now accompany me to the palace, where you will receive further instruction on this subject.'





CHAPTER XXXI.



THUS Geoffrey Leigh became at once on a footing of confidential intimacy in the house of the Marquis de Boisfontaine, where he now entirely resided. He had the pleasure of feeling that he was useful to the Marquis, and could give him just the service he needed. He became attached to the upright old noble, who regarded him in the light of a son. The Court entertainments were all open to him, and he had opportunities of seeing all the notabilities of the time. The extraordinary selfishness, recklessness, and want of judgment evinced by those in power struck him with

the force of astonishment. The more he saw behind the glamour of that brilliant social life, the more he was penetrated with the certainty that, whatever happened to France, the fatuous blindness of those in office about the King was hastening the ruin of the State, if not the destruction of the Throne. Things were, in fact, hurrying onward at a pace more rapid than even such onlookers as Geoffrey Leigh could have thought possible. In the confusion, or, rather, in the tumult of the times, unexpected and startling incidents occurred, and all things seemed to be impelled, tossed to and fro, excited as by a fever. The visit to Boisfontaine was indefinitely postponed; no one could leave the Court just now to whose hands the sovereign had entrusted anything connected with affairs. At last the surcharged air broke out from sullen mutterings into a storm, the more awful for its presage of what was to come.

It was the 14th of July, in that year of

1789. Geoffrey Leigh had been engaged during the greater part of the previous night in preparing papers to be submitted that day to the King. After a short sleep of a few hours, he had partaken of a hurried breakfast in his own room ; and feeling himself to be entitled to a little relaxation, descended to Antoinette's boudoir, to refresh himself with a sight of her, and to hear the news of the day. Receiving no cheerful ' *Entrez,*' as usual, he ventured to enter the room. The green jalousies were closed, but the air was full of the warmth of sunshine and the sweet breath of flowers. He looked round, and, to his consternation, perceived Toinette lying on the couch, her face to the wall, and sobbing bitterly.

' Antoinette !' he exclaimed, springing forward. ' What is it ? What has happened ?'

At first she gave no answer. Then, coming near, and bending over her, he said :

' Toinette ! tell me what has hurt you !'

Will you not answer? Will you not speak to me—to your—your—brother, Toinette?

He got these last words out with some effort.

‘Oh, Geoffrey!’ she sobbed, ‘I am ashamed that you should find me thus! You never saw me weep at Leigh, did you?’

‘Never, never, Toinette! And—and—by heaven, I cannot stand it now!’

There was something in his voice, almost a tremor, which reached Antoinette’s sensitive ear, and, through her ear, her heart. This aroused her self-control, and, gathering herself together, she rose up, endeavouring to speak calmly.

‘I have been so terrified,’ she said, passing her hand over her heavy eyes, ‘so shocked; and I was alone! I could not defend myself!’

‘Defend yourself, Toinette! Alone! Here, in your father’s house, with servants about you, and with at least one person under the same roof who would defend you with his life! With——’

‘No one could have reached me. No one could have helped me, Geoffrey. Listen, and I will tell you. I was bending over my flower-stand—see, the jug lies in pieces on the floor, and the water is shed all about, just as it fell from my hand in my terror—that little door opened suddenly, and before me stood a *femme de chambre*, once in my service—when first I came to Boisfontaine from happy England—a girl whose name is Dorine. She served me well. It is true that I did not like her. She did not serve me for love—as Bessie and all my dear aunt’s servants did, at Leigh. I was afraid—yes, truly, afraid of her. Yet I had never dreamed of asking that she might be dismissed. One day she dressed my hair, and assisted at my rising in the morning. I noticed nothing unusual about her—but—that was the last time. She disappeared from Boisfontaine ; and she used my name to tell a lie to cover her flight.’

‘Wretch!’ cried Geoffrey. ‘What is she doing here, then, in Paris? How did she dare intrude upon you here? What did she want?’

‘She stood before me, there,’ said Toinette, growing pale at the very remembrance. ‘Her eyes were gleaming, her dark face was an angry red; she said to me in a threatening voice: “I am starving—I am wasting! Take me, then, again into your service” (she said *thy* service, Geoffrey!), “and save me!” She did not look starving, nor wasted, nor ill. But, oh, she looked terribly evil! I feared her, Geoffrey—I feared her!’ said Antoinette, shuddering at the bare remembrance. ‘I said to her (not harshly), “Dorine, that cannot be. If you starve, I am sorry. It need not so have been. Here is money.” I offered her what I had about me. She had looked fierce before—but oh! she was now like some terrible beast, some wild creature. “Alms!” she cried: “and from

thee ! From the sister of Armand ! A thousand diables, never ! I might have stooped to service—I—but to charity—*thy* charity !—*thy* pity !—*thy* contemptuous dole of coins ! Nay—pitiful—nay ! But to revenge : to payment on my part for destroying my father, for starving my mother, for harnessing my brother as an ass, or as a horse ; for leaving me with false words of promise to their fulfilment in lies ; for all these, and much more—Père Boisfontaine and thy nest of owls, I denounce thee ! and will bring thee to a bitter vengeance !” So saying, she left me.’

Antoinette was so shaken by the mere recital of this scene, that she trembled from head to foot, and turned deadly pale. As for Geoffrey, all the chivalry in him rose in arms, longing to punish condignly so much wickedness, and to defend the beautiful girl, whose tears he could not endure to witness.

‘Antoinette,’ he said, drawing nearer to her, ‘I can assure you truly that the idea

of leaving France just now grows every hour more insupportable to me. The service I was so proud of a while ago seems now as a chain about my neck. What shall I not feel when to-morrow arrives, next week, to-day, whenever it may be when I shall have, at an hour's notice, to set forward on this business, and I leave you—thus! If under this roof you are liable to such insufferable insolence, where, then, are you to be safe? Oh,' he continued, an intense and passionate longing to protect her getting the better of him, and casting all his resolution and all his self-command to the four winds—'oh, if you would but leave this dreadful country and these perils behind you! Come with me, Toinette! Come home to us—to us who so value and love you! Come to Leigh, my darling!—my love!

The entreaty, the pathos, the passion in his voice aroused Antoinette. It was sweet to hear that pleading voice; to see, to feel

that in all the world she was to him most dear. But in her clear tone there was no hesitation; she must at once and for ever put an end to this. She turned to him, rising as she did so, and said, in a low, distinct voice :

‘Geoffrey, you forget yourself. What! leave my father, my mother, the Queen, my—my—— But you did not mean it,’ she said, seeing the downcast, distressed look in his face. ‘You, Geoffrey, would be the last, the very last, to counsel such dishonour. Also, we must remember, you and I, that I no more belong wholly to myself—not even to my father, nor to my mother. I am betrothed—given away!’

Her voice sank almost to a whisper, but there was neither tremor nor hesitation in it now.

‘It is an evil, an iniquitous system!’ said Geoffrey, with flashing eyes. ‘How could you, half English, think of it with patience?’

I cannot! These childish betrothals are the curse of France!

‘With that we two have nothing to do,’ said Antoinette, making a movement as if to pass by him.

‘Ah, I see it all, fool that I am! This betrothed of yours——’

‘Let me pass, Geoffrey. I had not expected this.’

‘Oh, Toinette,’ he cried, with intense feeling, starting forward as he spoke, ‘do you not know, then, that I have loved you since—yes, since I first saw you, and you fell asleep in my arms, a little tired child? I thought, idiot and fool that I was, that you too cared for me! But no! I leave my country, my home, my friends, to come and redeem my promise—to seek for you. I find you—what? The betrothed of a man of whom you know nothing—of a man whom you cannot, you shall not care for! And I—I who would cherish, save, defend you——’

‘For me,’ said Antoinette, with a dignity that well became her, ‘I, in my troubles, have thought, until now, that the standard of all that was noble and true was in my cousin’s breast. But, alas for me! he is the first to tempt me to forswear myself! Farewell, Geoffrey. We must not meet again.’

As she spoke, and before he could detain her, she left him.





CHAPTER XXXII.



WHILE Geoffrey, left to his own thoughts, was regarding himself in a very inferior light compared to the high-spirited girl whose good opinion he felt that he deserved to forfeit, he was roused from his unpleasant reflections by a summons to the presence of the Marquis. As he ascended the stairs, and notwithstanding his painful preoccupation, he could not help noticing the servants and lackeys who were standing about, some belonging to the household, some to a carriage which stood under the porte cochère. There was a sort of freemasonry of intelligence about

them—an indefinable something which he felt, but could not have described. At the same moment a booming sound of cannon was distinctly audible. Something was afoot; something unusual was happening, or had happened. On being announced at the door of the Marquis's apartment, Geoffrey perceived that the Duc de Liancourt was there, in deep consultation, with every mark of dismay and anxiety on his face.

‘What is it, sir? What has happened?’ was Geoffrey’s eager question.

‘There is a rising, an émeute, in the city. Hark! you hear the guns distinctly!’

And the sullen, heavy sound again thundered across the space between Paris and Versailles.

‘It is a trifle,’ said the Marquis, looking white and anxious all the same—‘an outbreak among the lowest, an émeute of the canaille. I go to the King, to suggest that troops be called out; a few rounds of

ammunition will frighten them. It is a bagatelle !

‘ My friend,’ said the Duc gravely, ‘ you repeat almost in words what the King has but now said, in the council-room, to Monsieur de Brienne and myself. But this is, in truth, clouding over the facts. It is playing with edged tools. Let us thank Heaven we are not in the place of Monsieur de Sens. This is no mere faubourg rising : this is no bagatelle, my friend. It is a revolution ! Those guns are pointed at the Bastille. Yes, the crown of stone at the head of the Faubourg St. Antoine is crumbling stone by stone, tower by tower, at the sound of each cannon-shot that reaches us here !’

‘ The Bastille ! Great heavens !’ was all the astonished and paralyzed Marquis could ejaculate.

‘ Yes, the Bastille. The King seems too much overpowered to give orders. The Archbishop—you know his rash, impetuous

nature : no judgment, no foresight, no strength ; now in a paroxysm of anger ; now yielding as a woman ! The Queen—angry, passionate, but superb ! Ah, yes, without doubt, superb ! But all at fault. Those of us who see are powerless. Those who have the power are blind. Alas for France ! for her people ! for her throne ! These are evil days. But let us go ; the King wishes to see you, Monsieur le Marquis. My carriage waits. Bring your secretary with you.’

The Duc turned as he spoke, with a look like a stag at bay—as if the sensation was too awful, too terrible ; as if he could hardly breathe under such a burthen. Then they descended to the carriage ; Geoffrey glad enough to be employed, and to be his uncle’s companion, who he thought looked sadly shaken and despondent. For himself, he was wretched enough to be at least in sympathy with the troubles of his two companions. He blamed himself, he blamed

Antoinette ; he blamed his own selfishness and his own folly ; and he blamed her for the nobility of character which he was too distraught to appreciate ; his mood changing from wrath to sorrow, from defiance to remorse, and from regret to tenderness, as many times as there were yards along the road which the four fat horses and the cumbrous wheels of the Duc de Liancourt's coach had to traverse before it entered, with the privilege of a high noble's equipage, under the marble portico of the palace.





CHAPTER XXXIII.



DAY or two after the events above recorded, Geoffrey Leigh took a hired fiacre, and, at his uncle's request, drove to the British Embassy on business connected with his voyage to England. Like most men of his age, he was full of curiosity as to passing events, and in particular the tremendous events which were being enacted under his very eyes. Mingled, in this instance, with the aforesaid curiosity, was a sense that there would be a certain amount of danger in satisfying it. At the Embassy he met Mr. Hugh Conway, with whom he had originally travelled to

Paris, and to him Geoffrey confided his intention of visiting the ruins of the Bastille that same night. Accordingly, they set out together towards midnight. And, taking into consideration the perturbed state of the city, and the suspicion afloat as to the trustworthiness of either patrols, gendarmes, or any other guardians of the public peace, they considered themselves to be acting with praiseworthy caution in carrying each a swordstick, and a brace of pistols between them, and in wrapping large cloaks over their evening dress. They sallied forth, then, with all the zest of knight-errants. It was a dark, cloudy night, and in the sullen sky there was neither moon nor star visible. The air was hot, as if a storm was brewing, and they said to each other that they must expect to be drenched with heavy rain before they returned. The streets, contrary to their expectation, were so far quiet, as, watchful and alert, they went on their way. They thought it noticeable how little was

stirring. The cafés were half empty ; the lamps of the gayest city in the world seemed too few for the needs of wayfarers like themselves ; for, despite their brave young manhood, they felt that any dark corner might screen a robber, any doorway a murderer, a sans culotte, one of the people from the people's quarter, prowling about in the spirit of lawlessness that was rife. At length, however, making their way without any of the hindrances they expected, they came upon a sight which neither of them ever forgot. The great fabric of the Bastille lay in part a giant ruin upon the ground, although vast portions of its walls and stone floors even yet resisted the levellers. There were dismantled doorways, with posts and lintels of stone, from which the iron-studded doors, with their locks and bars, were torn. There were broken remains of secret stairs, once trodden by the imprisoned and their gaolers, now affording coigns of vantage much disputed for by the riff-raff of Paris. The

pointed roof of one of the small tourelles had fallen like a huge extinguisher to the ground, unbroken. It was now being addressed by a crazy enthusiast with a sort of grim jocularity : he was patting it, stroking it, beating it with his fist, and calling it by every ridiculous and every shocking name which his ingenuity could invent or his memory reproduce, as if it were a human being. Men and women were engaged, by the light of torches and lanterns, in groping amidst the ruins ; whether for treasure, for souvenirs, or for relics of the late slaughter, they probably did not know themselves—but, at all events, for sensation and excitement. Shouts, smothered into groans, greeted any small success of the searchers, who then moved on to some other part of the vast pile, and were lost to sight. In what had once been the inner court of the fortress—now choked with débris and huge stones, on which sat, or lounged, or stood, a motley gathering of the very scum

of the adjacent faubourg—a space had been cleared, in the centre of which a fire was lit, fed from time to time by broken beams, planks of doors, and other such fragments. Geoffrey Leigh and his friend, looking on from behind the sheltering angle of a wall, beheld, dismayed, a scene of indescribable horror.

A troop of women, half clad, with wild elf-locks and naked arms, were dancing hand in hand round the leaping, blazing fire, and chanting a hoarse, low song, which seemed to scorch the ears of the two listeners; though, being English, they could not fully understand the depth of its infamy. These women, with eyes like furies, and half mad, whether from excitement or wine, or both combined, tossed their arms aloft, linked hands, and sang with a terrible cadence, which could not be called music, keeping time with their feet, and imparting a dismal, savage intention to the scene, which filled the young Englishmen with horror. They

seemed like demons from a lost world, rejoicing over the ruin they had created.

Presently, when their fury had somewhat exhausted itself, and their voices grown hoarse and incapable of further strain, the maniac dance ceased, the circle of their hands was broken and tossed aside, as one of their number disentangled herself and stepped forward as if to speak. Somewhat more decently dressed than the others, she stood forth from the terrible ring, and addressed them, not in the lingo of the faubourg, but with a strong provincial accent. Geoffrey's gaze was riveted upon her. He was thinking of Antoinette, and her description of the *femme de chambre* who had so insolently invaded her private apartment. The dull, saturnine complexion, the wicked gleaming eyes—it might well be—it surely must be—she? He was destined to perceive fully the truth of his suspicion.

‘Sisters!’ she began; ‘good wives! vengeuses! The time is at hand when all

wrongs will be avenged. Yours in the town—ours in the campagne! 'Let us swear on these stones, stained with the blood of generations, and now torn down by the people's hands, Vengeance! Vengeance! Vengeance!'

Shrieks of responsive applause greeted this suggestive speech; and the weird and motley spectators of the scene shouted forth short, sharp, decisive 'Vivas!' which sounded like fusillades of musketry.

'Now,' said the speaker, 'let us denounce, first, the Queen! that Autrichienne, the head of all oppression, wickedness, theft of the goods of the poor, and evil-living!'

These last words were almost lost in the volley of curses flung from the lips of these wretches—most of them women—on the name of the Queen of France. Geoffrey and his companion shook with mingled rage and horror, afraid to move lest a stone or a fragment of the débris should be dislodged, and betray them to those who, at such a time

and in such a mood, might have torn them limb from limb, foreigners though they were.

At length comparative silence fell on them. Then another and another of the ring of witchlike creatures, bent on wickedness, stood forth, each to denounce someone—always a woman—who was near the Queen. In this way Madame de Polignac, Madame de Canisy, Madame de Lamballe, Madame Campan, the Duchesse de Grammont, Madame de Tourzel, Madame de Noailles, Madame de Boisfontaine—in fact, all those whose names history has written in letters of gold as faithful and devoted adherents of fallen royalty, or chronicled amongst the coward band—traitors to their King, their country, their ancient names—known as the *émigrés*. At each such name a volley of curses and vows of vengeance rose up with the smoke of the fire, as it glowed and leaped from amidst the ruins of the great prison of Paris, until the very hair

of the listeners rose in horror at the vindictive malice of the denunciations. It seemed too much, too great a trial, to lie perdu there, unable so much as to protest, or even to call the gens d'armes to disperse the gathering, and to have to listen to it in silence ! But this was not all. Exceptionally loud and passionate 'Vivas !' at the mention of certain of the doomed names appeared to proceed from a man seated on a great slab of stone---once a bench in one of the dungeons---which was only a few yards in front of their hiding-place. His back was towards them ; but as he stooped slouching forward, the outline of his figure thrown into strong relief by the red light of the flames, which now smouldered, now leaped upwards into the night, Geoffrey noticed the strength and breadth of his brawny shoulders. His great shaggy head seemed, as he stooped, to spring almost directly from them, without any intervening neck, and was covered with a crop of rusty black hair,

which looked almost red in the lurid fire-light. The zest and energy of this man's 'Vivas!' the deep tones of his dreadful voice, and the low thunder of his curses, riveted Geoffrey's attention to him. He was certain that he had seen him before. Suddenly he turned half round and showed that he was blind of an eye. Yes ; he was a man constantly to be seen in the Palace of Versailles with a permit in his pocket, giving him access to the King's apartment as mate to his Majesty's locksmith. Before Geoffrey could, so to speak, digest the horror of this fact, his attention was drawn again to the weird circle round the fire. Once more the woman in the paysanne dress stood a little forward from the ring, crying out :

‘ And again, my friends, one more vengeance ! One more vengeance ! which, true as I stand here, on ground wet with the blood of aristocrats and of tyrants, I will pursue—I, myself—until the end ! Sisters ! I say now, à bas Boisfontaine, château and

demesne, root and branch, tree and stock, young and old !

This, and the vindictive curses with which it was interspersed, was also received with applause ; but, on the whole, with a less vigorous appreciation than better-known names, as being less interesting or less aggressively prominent than some others. What was lacking, however, in the general fervour was terribly atoned for by the loud and energetic applause of the one-eyed locksmith. He threw aloft his arms, viva'd, shook himself with a portentous joy, until at last the stone on which he sat, being uncertainly poised on a foundation inadequate to the strain, suddenly slipped forward, dislodging others in the fall, and both he and two or three shouting spectators were precipitated almost into the blazing embers of the fire, amidst the yells and shouts of the onlookers, and were rescued not without bruises, scrapings, and burnings.

In the confusion attending this incident

Geoffrey Leigh and his friend took the opportunity of departing as quietly as they came, but not before Geoffrey, recalled to the full use of his powers of observation by the imminent risk they ran, had noticed, as an addition to the grave significance of the scene, that several gens d'armes, with their glittering bayonets and in full uniform, were not only passive spectators of the whole, but had spoken to, and been addressed by, some of the prominent actors in it, probably relations or acquaintances of their own, thus offering a suspicion the most frightful as to the loyalty of their whole body.





CHAPTER XXXIV.



NCE or twice only since that memorable day had Geoffrey been in the presence of Antoinette, and then in company with others. She now lived almost entirely in her mother's apartments in the palace, so that he and the Marquis were practically alone in the house by the great entrance, and he was very often its sole occupant. Bitterly and incessantly did he now blame himself for giving her just cause for reproach. She betrayed no anger when they met ; he thought he could have borne that more patiently than the grave, sad, preoccupied look which he could not

bear to see. And, knowing what he now knew, he could scarcely endure the thought of leaving France — and her. However, matters were about to come to a crisis. It was one very early morning in September; Geoffrey had risen betimes after a miserable night, during the fevered watches and slow hours of which he had been endeavouring to plan some excuse for asking a private interview with Antoinette, to make a last effort to obtain her forgiveness, and a renewal of the old affectionate brother - and - sisterly terms which he was ready now to swear to observe. He was seated at his desk, buried in deep thought, when the door of the apartment opened and the Marquis himself appeared. He looked old, and perplexed, and burthened, but he brightened visibly at the sight of Geoffrey, who rose respectfully, and stood until the old noble was seated.

‘ You are a faithful scribe, my nephew,’ he began. ‘ I am in many ways beholden to you. The time has now come for me to

test your honour, and to try your goodness of heart still further ; and I will ask you to consider my communication as a private one.'

'I am ready, sir, to obey you to the letter.'

The Marquis waved his hand to him to sit down, and added, ' Approach nearer to me, for these walls and locks have ears.'

The Marquis then took from his coat a sealed parcel, which he bade Geoffrey transfer to his own breast-pocket. ' Observe,' he said, ' this is in fact a State paper in the guise of a private letter. The Queen, as you know, desires to send it by sure hand to the Premier of England. Whether it will tend to make our case better understood, and place our need in a clearer light before the rulers of your land of liberty, I cannot say—nor you. But it is to be remembered that the Queen of France stood alone in opposing any interference on the part of this kingdom with English difficulties in

America. Let that be known ; and, monsieur my nephew, she is—yes—she is not only a queen, but a noble-hearted woman. She is speaking here' (and he tapped the paper with his forefinger) 'as she speaks in her great need to us, who can so poorly serve her, with the energy which might become a king ! See, from your point of view, that she has right, and that she is understood. You will undertake to convey this packet in safety ?'

'And to return with the answer, sir,' answered Geoffrey, adding, to himself, 'or without it—but to return at all risks, I swear.'

The Marquis then opened a drawer in a buhl cabinet which stood near, and took from it another packet, also carefully sealed. 'This is addressed to my friend, your honourable father,' he said. 'It contains my will, and a bequest, which I beseech him to undertake. It is, in fact, all—all, my nephew, which I am able to save for those so dear to me

—those who, to judge however hopefully of the future, may need it to the uttermost. May we live and be permitted to claim it in better days! And this,’ added the Marquis, taking a purse of gold from his bureau, ‘I have orders to place in your hands. You are undertaking a great trust ; we must, at least, make the wheels of your travelling-coach go as easily as may be. The Queen herself sends you this ; no words : this is a royal command.’

Geoffrey obeyed, and concealed the money with care in the breast of his coat.

‘I have been more disturbed than you know of,’ said the Marquis very gravely, ‘and have by no means forgotten your account of your experience on the site of the “people’s triumph,” as they call it in their democratic broadsheets. It is the fashion at Versailles to say it is nothing—to call the firing of cannon turned by the hands of the people upon the King’s fortress an *émeute* of the faubourgs ; to say that royalty is as popular

as ever ; to applaud Beaumarchais and his forbidden plays ; to idolize American Republicanism, and to speak of the canaille as amusing themselves, and as incapable of giving further trouble ! Mark me, this is said near the King, and he, so trusting, so generous, half believes it. But *I—I*, Louis de Loménie de Boisfontaine, do not tell him so. I say it is an insult to authority, a rebellion, a preconcerted scheme, of which I would that I could see the end and aim ! At all events, there is something evil and Jacobin in the air that a movement like the destruction of the Bastille should be possible. Behold, also, this lay on the floor in my daughter's apartment — the apartment of mademoiselle my daughter,' repeated the old noble, proudly raising his head and drawing himself up as he resented afresh, and to his heart's core, the insult of which he spoke. He put into Geoffrey's hands a six-franc piece, on the surface of which were cut these words : 'July 14. 3 Pistols.'

‘When was this found, sir?’

‘On the day of the destruction of the King’s fortress prison.’

‘It is a token,’ said Geoffrey, looking at it keenly—‘an infamous payment for infamous deeds! Doubtless, many another such was given out amongst the rabble in payment of murder and bloodshed, as if the passions of such a mob required feeding and rousing, lest they should be slack to serve the ends of the demagogues who lead them!’

Then, rising to take his leave, Geoffrey ventured to say :

‘Madame my aunt, shall I have the honour to see her, or Mademoiselle de Boisfontaine, again?’

‘My wife and daughter,’ began the Marquis, in the stately tone and manner in which he always spoke of the ladies of his house—then, unable to keep up appearances any longer, and unconsciously to himself affected at taking leave of Geoffrey, he paused, and in a low broken voice con-

tinued: 'Those most dear to me are at Versailles. My house—mine—that of their husband and father, is no place of safety for them.' Then an angry feeling, altogether natural and to be respected, made him spring from his chair as if the thought stung him to the quick. He paced the room for some moments, and then said: 'We of Boisfontaine are no time-servers. We remain! And the brunt of the battle may be to us; but we shall not shrink from it. We are with the King and Queen, we! If we loved and served them in prosperity, in adversity we shall share their fate. Not so *all* who have been nearest the throne. Figure to yourself: I have heard to-day that the green livery of D'Artois was seen on the road to Brussels! At least, at least, my nephew, we shall not be found there: the crime of cowardice was never of the house of Boisfontaine!'



CHAPTER XXXV.



AFTER that outburst of the 14th July, the great Tiger of the Revolution feigned a fitful slumber ; as it were, seeming to lie down amongst the ruins of the Bastille. Some people thought that his sleep was real, some even called it death, and said that his power and energy were gone. Such as these (who had, above all others, been a prey to the direst terror) now came forth from their hiding-places, and with mincing gait and ill-timed levity began again to ‘walk delicately,’ like the captive king of old, thinking that the bitterness of death had passed.

Armand, Vicomte de Salis, had nominally apartments in his father's house at Versailles; but when off duty with his corps, he preferred inhabiting a portion of the old family Hôtel de Boisfontaine in Paris. Here he led a life of dissipation and extravagance, like most other young men of fashion. At this time, after a manner as mad as anything which characterized the young noblesse of France, they combined the most exaggerated admiration of Republican phrases, sentiments and literature with the most absolute contempt for the *canaille*, and a treatment of their immediate dependents which was equivalent to classing them with the brute creation. So true it is that they invented an imaginary peasantry who were to be treated in a theoretical way, while the real living poor and dependents were to them as animals, not human beings. There was marrying and giving in marriage, and there was evil and luxurious living amongst the noblesse. There was also a

class-hatred, a conviction stronger than ever that the people must be 'kept down' since that great outburst of July, the hatred which was to draw a blood-red line between the aristocracy and the people—a line so deep and so red that all the multitudinous seas of misery and tears that were to flood fair France could never wash it out again.

It was in this breathing-time that Armand de Salis, sole heir of the lands and honours of Boisfontaine, came to the surface, so to speak, and claimed the bride apportioned to him years ago by her parents and his. Monsieur de Salis was one of those to whose intelligence nothing was comprehensible but the most visible facts.

It was the last week in September, 1789—ten weeks since the destruction of the Bastille ; and nothing—nothing, that is to say, affecting himself or his interests (for State affairs, such as the Duc d'Aiguillon's famous reform of the taxes, etc., had no meaning for

such as he)—nothing, then, had occurred to disturb the public peace. Everything was the same as it had always been to him. On his toilette-table, for example, stood the same gold and silver dressing-case which he had felt to be so essential a part of his equipment on his entering life as one of the Queen's Body-guard. The costly filigree boxes containing scented powders and essences were placed, according to what he called his 'eye of arrangement,' in precise order on the table before his mirror. On the hearth of this luxurious chamber a wood-fire burnt, which was necessary to the comfort of Monsieur de Salis during most of the year. Exquisite paintings by Watteau hung on either side of a marble Venus at one end of the room. There were silver-framed mirrors, couches of silk and velvet; and before the fire a large hearthrug of the skins of wolves (from Boisfontaine) added to the splendid comfort of the apartment. Monsieur's chocolate was served to the moment; his

servants were tolerably obsequious ; everything went by clockwork ; therefore everything was right in Paris and in France. What did it signify, then, to monsieur if outside the window it rained or thundered ? or later on in the year, for example, if it froze, or snowed, or hailed ? He and his friends would still go to the opera, to the play, to see ' Figaro ' (and laugh at it) ; still go to hear Clairon sing, and still meet at those petits soupers which were the charm of life. What mattered it that the faubourgs were cold, dark, hungry, and infested by sans culottes ? What, finally, were the cries of the starved, the moanings of the sick and sorry, the threats of the desperate, to such as they ? Mere ravings, moanings, discontented murmurs on the night-wind !

After the upheaval and want of arrangement which had happened in July last, these few weeks of peace — a peace so false and hollow — were quite restoring.

Monsieur de Salis could, however, get no more money from Boisfontaine. Grimeau, surintendant, had been vulgarly disagreeable, positive, and resistant himself lately. Monsieur's other sources of income were simply too ridiculously inadequate to his expenses ; nothing stared him in the face at this moment so distinctly as further disarrangements of various kinds, or—marriage. Marriage, then, he had chosen, and his wedding-day was arranged to be the 1st October.

On that eventful morning Monsieur de Salis received a good many unpleasant little greetings on the occasion of his rising. The Marquis de Boisfontaine regretted that the King's affairs would prevent his being at the ceremony. He, however, enclosed a bundle of the new assignats for a serviceable sum, with advice to store these for future needs, or for a sudden journey to join the emigrants. This hint that his private plans as to making common cause with those recalcitrants were

not unknown enraged monsieur so much, that, having caned his valet for a slight omission of duty that very morning, he promptly made over to him the bundle of assignats as a token of forgiveness, and felt quite refreshed at having so asserted himself against his father. Another letter had also been brought to monsieur's notice on a silver salver, together with his chocolate. It was to announce that the new carriage, with canary-coloured linings, and his armorial bearings in full, would not be completed until monsieur sent a large remittance towards his account. Finally, there was yet another epistle, dirty, creased, and ill-penned, lying by his side. This letter ran as follows :

‘Dorine is not dead — Dorine lives. Duclôt lives. Vengeance lives!’

Monsieur de Salis, it need hardly be told, tore this last letter—one of a series of such—into shreds, and scattered them on the floor of his luxurious apartment, whence some of the ‘pigs’ and ‘reptiles’ who attended

him might sweep them into oblivion when he had gone to the Rue St. Jacques to meet his bride.

People said that the bridal was most picturesque, and most correct as to observances ; and there was a banquet afterwards, also much praised, and said to be à l'Anglais. Unfortunately, as the guests were leaving, a storm of thunder and lightning occurred, which caused a great deal of confusion, and was whispered to be a very bad omen. So many people were crowded under the portico of the house, both of wedding guests and sightseers, as well as the torch-bearers belonging to the coaches of the nobility, that the Boisfontaine lackeys and those of the house had their work cut out to keep order. Amongst so many, one would hardly have noticed a woman with a black shawl wrapped about her head and face, and a man with one eye and a huge brawny frame, on which the spite of the lackeys laid many a blow as he

bothered them by lurking behind this carriage, and diving down under the wheels and horses of that and the other cumbrous equipage, always trying to get close to the door of the house, as if to see monsieur hand his bride into their berlin and set off. And as the newly-wedded pair drove away into the night, and there was no one left to stare at, the populace dispersed.





CHAPTER XXXVI.



HIS year of 1789 had known so many memorable dates, the 5th May, the 14th July, the 4th and 20th August, the 20th September, all marking so many decided steps on the way to the great downfall of the Throne. And now the 6th October, the worst by far that had as yet befallen the royal family of France, dawned upon them—for the last time at Versailles. The great Tiger aroused himself from his savage slumbers; the people became clamorous again. All night they were afoot, the tocsin clanging, the générale beating; soon enough they emerged from the quarters where they swarmed and surged

into the main streets, and, following the fiends who led them, took the road to Versailles. Arrived there in the dark morning, while the dwellers in the palace slept, they had one savage impulse dominating them—to get at the Queen and destroy her. We know the story of that day by heart ; how one man—La Fayette—undertook to hold the bridle-rein which hung loosely as yet round the neck of the people's will. Not inimical to the King and Queen, not wholly in sympathy with the nature of the monster he had undertaken to guide, but vain, wishing for fame, whichever side should gain the day in the struggle ; desirous of the glory of mediator ; a man, whom neither side owned entirely, and each believed devoted to the other. In this vain, showy, unpractical nature there was a little heart, which went entirely with the pathetic spectacle of fallen royalty ; there was a fund of selfishness, which later on deepened into a fear of consequences, and led him to secure himself by

flight. How could such a man either save the throne or lead the people ?

He, La Fayette, was at Versailles. But for all his vows of fealty and offers of help, he slept so soundly that he did not hear the tramp of the wild army clamouring at the gates. Conceive it ! And he with troops under his command ! So, but for the bravery of her women, and the fidelity of the gallant Miomandre St. Marie, the Queen had never lived to see that day.

‘ Save the Queen ! ’ this hero cried ; ‘ her life is aimed at ! I stand alone against two thousand tigers ! ’ and, holding against such odds the door of the royal apartment, fell where he stood.

So the Revolutionary monster turned his face towards Paris, and insisted upon dragging in his wake the chariot of the King. With him went the Queen, Madame Elizabeth, and the royal children. We know all about that progress to Paris. We also know that it took six hours to accomplish it.

That six hours of such misery, such insult, such degradation as it is impossible to think of without a shudder, brought them at last to the Tuileries, where there was lack of everything. The great palace, hitherto lent as a kind of home for people in service about the Court, had no provision on such short notice for royal guests. Paris went mad that night with an outburst of hysterical joy—bonfires, illuminations, excited crowds, and all the tokens of rejoicing. Those were, indeed, days and nights of madness; and only for a short time was the fiction kept up that it was a madness of joy, or of loyalty. No, the Tuileries was a prison; and those who sheltered there were prisoners. This fact became more apparent every week. So passed the winter. The shadow of death lurked in the food at every meal. Death lurked everywhere, at all times of the day and night. His dread reality would have been welcome in place of this shadow.

At length the spring-time came again, and

with it breathing-time—a reprieve. The captives were allowed a change of air. That change was to St. Cloud. With the royal family went most of those faithful friends who adhered to them in their sorrows ; and, amongst them, the personages with whom our story is chiefly concerned.

On one of those lovely spring days which seem especially made for hope and happiness, Antoinette de Boisfontaine sat in the window of her own room, watching the Queen and her children on the terrace below, and listening to their exclamations of delight. Well might they rejoice. Instead of walking *en évidence* in the Tuileries gardens, which were the people's thoroughfare, they might wander at will through these groves and alleys, and fear no array of lowering faces, no muttered threats, no guards who scowled like enemies. No wonder that their voices had the music of gladness in them, and that even the Queen herself looked comparatively at peace.

Antoinette was thinking about the many changes which had happened since she returned to France ; of her life at Boisfontaine ; of her life at Versailles ; of her life at the Tuileries. She thought of all whom she loved in England ; the life there seemed to have been a dream, it was so unreal, and so far behind. She thought of Geoffrey as she had seen him that day when he had pleaded his love, and she had rejected and left him. Left him, yes ; and, thank God ! in ignorance of the truth. She had so longed for his help, and for his care. The greater the uncertainty and misery around her, the greater the danger that pressed on every side, the greater the longing to be taken away from it ; and the vision of Leigh, where no evil voice was ever heard, no face wore anything but kindness, had seemed to glow and brighten before her that day. If the measure of the victory be the greatness of the temptation, Antoinette felt that she might look back without regret. While

these thoughts were passing through her mind the door opened, and the *bonne* entered with a letter in her hand.

‘It has been to Boisfontaine in search of mademoiselle,’ she said, ‘then to Versailles, then to the Tuileries, and again here, to St. Cloud. The bearer of it has brought it from across the seas; and in truth his republican manners are such that he would have followed me hither to interview mademoiselle, and to deliver it into her own hands! Bah! Things are becoming altogether too astonishing!’

Antoinette looked at the letter. It was addressed in a hand which she did not know. Then she opened it and looked at the signature, and with a strange tightening at her heart she began to read the first letter she had ever received from her betrothed husband. It was somewhat diffuse as to language, and in matter discursive. After a formal preamble, it ran thus:

‘The progress of events reaches me through letters from my commanding officer, the good and brave La Fayette, that hero of two worlds! Patriots are his brothers; Liberty is his life. His great heart embraces all; and while he loves his King, he loves his country first. With such a man at the helm, all is well. He—and who but he?—can guide the people of France to liberty, the King to counsels of wisdom, and the throne to safety! But,’ continued the writer, descending from Pegasus to earth, ‘as, from my experience here, I see that great changes bring great penalties, I write to assure you—*you*, mademoiselle, who, next to my duty, have never ceased to reign in my heart since I knew your worth and goodness—that I think day and night of how these so grand events and coming changes may affect your life, and those for whom you live, and how, being absent, I can best serve all. Even with La Fayette at the helm [the Marquis had his adoring

glance turned upon that episode at Versailles of 6th October last] there must of necessity be many rocks ahead, and many adverse winds to meet, ere the great ship he aspires to guide can be safely steered into smooth waters. This idea so presses upon me, that for the silencing of my own anxieties I feel compelled to send home a man who is my foster-brother, one who has served me devotedly, and who has been my confidant and humble friend. Should there be a vacant place in the household of Monsieur le Marquis, he might be found useful in most ways, and might be trusted in case of emergency. If not, he has commendations from me to Monsieur de la Fayette, to whom he is known, and who will employ him. He will always be, in either case, at the service of mademoiselle.'

After this there was something about the Star-spangled Banner and the Bird of Freedom, and then, 'Oh, my country! I behold thee, with eagle pinions, soaring to

the skies ! Alas ! thy wings are covered with the dust of ages, and cramped with the prison-chains of bondage ! Would that my hands might join with those who are labouring to set thee free ! But '—sudden descent from rhapsody to truth—' duty keeps me here. Duty, to me once lovely and all-sufficing, now become so hard-featured and unlovely in my eyes ! Blessed indeed will be the day, so desired, which shall restore me to mademoiselle and to France !

As Toinette read this letter, her woman's instinct appreciated it to the full.

' Brave, loyal gentleman ! ' she thought. ' I thank the good God who kept me in the hour of trial that I can look up to you and say, " Since the day we parted I have been faithful in word and deed ! " Yes, my chevalier " sans peur et sans reproche." Duty is the one thing worth living for. I give myself to follow mine in whatsoever guise it comes ! '



CHAPTER XXXVII.

CAUSES of delay into which it is needless for us to enter greatly harassed and retarded the fulfilment of Geoffrey Leigh's mission to England. Letters passed between him and the Marquis de Boisfontaine entirely on business. Sometimes a little note was enclosed from the ladies of either house to each other. But those from France were necessarily of the most fragmentary kind, chiefly relating to the health of the French ladies, which, according to these letters, was invariably good. No details of their life or circumstances, or the engrossing interests of the

fear and hope in which the royal household entirely lived, could be told in letters which ran constant risks of never reaching their destination. Geoffrey, therefore, knew nothing of the real state of things with regard to Antoinette and her people but what little he could gather from indications in the newspapers. Sometimes he would feel half mad at the thought that the Marquis de Vezécque might any day return, might already have returned ('covered with glory!') to claim his affianced wife. Then a little note in a delicate Italian hand would come for that 'Dear Aunt Marguerite' whom she loved, signed 'Antoinette de Boisfontaine.' He could breathe again, and reproach himself for thinking that Antoinette would, in the present state of affairs, leave her parents for any earthly call.

At length, quite late in the year 1791, he found himself in possession of the letter for which he had waited so long, the direct

answer to the private letter of the Queen of France entrusted to his immediate care, and enclosed in one, also private, to the Marquis de Boisfontaine. This packet he was enjoined to deliver personally, at all risks, into the hands of the Marquis himself. The delay and discomfort of the journey were but so many spurs to the eagerness of the young man, who did not find, on this return journey, either the courtesy or complaisance of the French people towards travellers at all the same as when last he went that road. He also carried a letter from his father, Sir Geoffrey Leigh. If the State business on which he had been employed had proved a failure, that family negotiation with which he had been also entrusted was not so, for Sir Geoffrey himself had undertaken it. The title-deeds of the estates in duplicate, and the other family papers connected with Boisfontaine, had been duly secured, and the salvage in money, assignats and jewels had been so arranged that they could be

claimed at any time by the rightful owners, should the need arise.

On reaching Paris at the close of a November day, Geoffrey went immediately to the small house near the Tuileries which the Marquis now made his private residence. Arriving there, he found that Monsieur le Marquis had gone down to Boisfontaine on private business of importance. He had left a special message with his maître d'hôtel, an old and attached servant, that in case of Mr. Leigh's arrival in Paris during this interval he should be invited to follow him to Boisfontaine. It was too late to think of doing so that night, and the disturbed and excited state of the country made a night journey, even so short a one, a dangerous experiment just now. Geoffrey therefore lent a favourable ear to the suggestions of the maître d'hôtel, and determined to remain where he was for the night, and set out as early as possible on the following day. The old servant, who had originally

been in the immediate service of the Marquise, and had been reared at Vertprés, on her father's estate, knew all those details of the family affairs, at present, which were precisely those which had the deepest interest for Geoffrey. He said that Madame had felt the troubles greatly ; but that come weal, come woe, such was her devotion to the Queen, that she was never for one day absent from her Majesty. That mademoiselle was without doubt an angel upon earth, and entirely devoted to her mother. That Monsieur le Marquis was much aged and changed of late, but that he was always in the King's confidence, and was known, unfortunately, by a great many wicked people to be in direct communication, not only with the émigrés, but, it was suspected, with Continental Courts—a reputation the most dangerous at the present moment. Monsieur the King's brother was still at the Luxembourg, and was not, on the whole, much hated, to judge by report ; but the

Comte d'Artois had long crossed the borders, and couriers were known to bring and take messages and letters in cipher to and from Monsieur le Marquis, which was of itself a misfortune. That his present visit to Boisfontaine was, to monsieur, a great trouble, and not without danger, because Grimeau, surintendant of the estate, had become disloyal, and turned patriot; consequently, things were very unsatisfactory, and required looking into, Monsieur le Vicomte having either gone abroad for his health or being with his regiment, or having gone to inspect his wife's estates—who could tell?—being, at least, just now absent from Paris. Here the old domestic shrugged, and looked unutterable things, and appeared immeasurably disgusted, but refrained from words.

It was, thanks to all these details, with a very anxious mind that Geoffrey Leigh set out the next day for Boisfontaine. Once he had hoped to see the fine old place, and

wander about its beautiful demesne with Antoinette. But how seldom it happens to us, in this world, that such dreams are realized ! It had been the romance of Geoffrey's life to visit Boisfontaine, but not in this way. Not to behold its decadence ; not to join its once proud owner in the day of the humiliation of his house ; not to look on the scenes which Antoinette had loved without her. It was a sad and sorry time ; and so he felt it.

As soon as the Marquis was apprised of his nephew's arrival, he descended the great staircase to meet him with all convenient speed, and received him with all the high-bred formalities that belonged to his own day and generation. And together they entered the salon, where, by the warm wood-fire, with a leather-bound volume in his hand, and wearing a complacent smile as of one charmed and interested in its contents, was no less a person than the Abbé de Vertprés ; on his part neither altered,

nor aged, nor thinner, nor paler than when Antoinette had taken leave of him, that late autumn, when she went to Paris to be presented at the French Court.

Monsieur l'Abbé at once laid down his book. He was charmed to see, once more, a guest at Boisfontaine. And such a guest as this ! A young Englishman, a compatriot of the philosophers of England, whom the Abbé, in spite of all Geoffrey's laughing denials, which he took for an ingenuousness becoming in a young man, persisted in believing came direct from personal intercourse with Pitt and the Lord Mayor of London ; with Burke, and Fox, and milord North—in fact, with every Englishman of note whose name had been mentioned in his hearing. All these notabilities, whose political or other creed, their position in the State, or their comparative value as statesmen were a blank to him, he mingled in one golden haze as 'philosophers of the English,' whatever that might mean.

Presently the Marquis proposed to Geoffrey that they should leave Monsieur l'Abbé to his studies, and stroll out upon the terrace.

The whole scene presented to him, so full of beauty and of interest, impressed Geoffrey Leigh in no common degree. The front of the Château was tinged with the faint sunlight of misty November. Around it lay those famous gardens, in which royalty itself had walked, and which the De Boisfontaine of Louis XIV.'s day had prevailed on Le Notre himself to remodel and arrange. Beyond were the great woods, abounding with game, where lately the wolves had been more formidable than ever; and behind that green yew-hedge, down those steps at the end of the terrace, were other gardens, 'green and old,' and studded here and there with rustic arbours. Geoffrey knew the whole by heart before he came there, from the graphic letters of Antoinette to his mother, and from all that she had described

to himself since then. He trod on what, to him, was hallowed ground. He could picture her to himself so vividly that he almost expected to see her walk out of the gray old portico, with her dainty air and her light step. And then a pang, so keen as to send the blood back to his heart, darted through him.

It was bitter to have the Marquis telling him, incident after incident, proof after proof, how unsafe the country was, how dangerous the very air of his own estate; to know that each remove of the Court—that fragment of a Court—from the Tuileries to St. Cloud, and thence back to the Tuileries, was fraught with danger to everyone concerned; to hear that schemes without end had been suggested for the escape of the royal family, and had more than once been accepted and all but carried into effect. Such plans meant safety to the royal captives, but to those around them—what? All this made Antoinette de Boisfontaine more dear

to him than ever, as he saw her separated from him by so many barriers, beyond his reach, and surrounded by circumstances entirely adverse to his interests, and so full of danger to herself. How he hated the very name and idea of De Vezécque!—the man who alone had the right to be near and to protect her! And he was in the New World, forsooth, following the cause of a knight-errant, and trifling with new theories; whilst the Old World, with its old ways and its old régime, was toppling to its doom, forsaken by sons and daughters, and left to the terrors of the time!

‘Ah, well, my nephew,’ said the Marquis, as they paced up and down together, whilst Geoffrey, wrapped in his own thoughts, had lived what seemed to him an age, ‘I confide to you that I had already forecast the result of your undertaking. It was, to say the least, unpractical, that plan of the bags of flour. It is true how scarce it is. The men—how they fought all the terrible past

winter days of '89-90*—fought with the bakers for the black bitterness which they call *bread* in the faubourgs ! But it was for France to alter that, not your gold-spending Pitt. But we have been to blame ; we should have left the rebels beyond the sea alone—at least, we should *not* have sealed with the seal of State the commissions of such hot bloods as the De Montcalmes, De Vezécques, La Fayette, and the rest. We played with fire, and—the game was not worth it ! Voilà tout. This is a retort.'

'Ah, my dear sir,' said Geoffrey, 'the bare truth is that England has her own troubles to live through in this matter. The vengeance, if such is to follow, comes from quite another quarter. Every soldier that has followed De Montcalme, or worshipped

* Thiers says that, 'No longer permitted to use metallic money, they (the poor) were obliged to receive a depreciated paper, with which it was difficult to procure such things as they needed. They had but one sort of black bread, for which they were obliged to contend at the door of the baker's shop, after waiting for several hours.'

that "hero of both worlds"—your La Fayette—will return to France Republican, Democrat, Radical; will return like a burning brand to a harvest field prepared for such ravages. That is the fear!

'Alas! and our armies, once the pride and flower of the world! The idea comes to me, to my distracted mind,' said the poor Marquis, tapping his forehead with his forefinger, 'are they indeed ours? are they faithful to us? or to the nation? or to the émigrés and foreign princes? to those of whose inconceivable blindness and mismanagement I myself have such proofs in these hands? Are they, again, the sword in the hand of Monsieur de la Fayette? or is he their tool? I cannot disentangle it!'

'If,' said Geoffrey, 'General la Fayette is not loyal to the throne, then is he at this moment the veriest traitor in all France. If he is indeed true, then is his doom certain, and not far from its consummation. For if *now* he can exercise his boasted sway

over your national guard, they will soon throw off a yoke which bears a semblance of authority—of order.’

So spoke Geoffrey Leigh. The young grew rapidly old in those days. He had met and conversed both with Dr. Moore and Arthur Young, and with all his faculties sharpened by the outlook which appeared to threaten all he held so dear, he heard, and saw, and understood.

Geoffrey soon found that his conversation puzzled and disquieted the spirit of the Marquis, whom he would fain rather cheer than depress, so that he took pains, like some kind physician, to soothe by alleviation where he could not hope to cure. He paid the fallen noble all the tender courtesies which the old delight to receive from the young. He determined to hear rather than to speak, and to listen rather than to argue, and was rewarded by learning all that was to be learnt of the family plans, regarding which the Marquis had far more foresight

and decision, it struck Geoffrey, than on the political situation. He said a few words in praise of the personal character of Monsieur de Vezécque, and the consolation it would be when he was able to return to France. His estates, it appeared, were considered to be safer than those of any of the surrounding nobles; the Duc de St. Gaudens, and those who had preceded him, had always had the reputation of being beloved and popular seigneurs, given to home life, and considerate of the well-being of their tenantry.

‘So that my daughter,’ said the old noble, who, as we know, always assumed that important air of his when speaking of his family—‘my daughter is, I trust, as likely to be safe and prosperous in her married life as the care and devotion of her husband, not unworthy of her, can make her.’

He paused. Antoinette was very dear to him, and something, even as he spoke, seemed to render his own words of doubtful

meaning. The while, Geoffrey Leigh, walking beside him, and to whom the very name of De Vezécque was provocation and torture, was smothering, as best he might, the passionate reflections which he dare not trust himself to dwell upon.

The afternoon and evening which they spent at Boisfontaine were long remembered by Geoffrey as a leaf from a closed book—a glimpse of old-world life in France, which was to end there, and then. The Abbé had his evening game; the three gentlemen supped together, and talked as high-bred gentlemen talked in those days; the old clock, which had droned out the time for so many generations of Boisfontaines, struck the hour of retirement; the valet of the Marquis lighted him and his English kinsman to their several apartments, and all in the great house was still. It was the last night which the Marquis de Boisfontaine ever spent in the home of his ancestors.

The next morning they were to return to

Paris, and Geoffrey obtained leave to say farewell to the Abbé in his own apartments. Arrived at the top of the staircase, and after being shown into that sanctum, where no feminine foot—not even Toinette's—had been known to enter, he found the Abbé serenely absorbed in those studies which effectually diverted his thoughts from any uneasiness about the present.

As it happened, Geoffrey had in his pocket a handsomely-bound travelling edition of Horace, which took the Abbé's fancy greatly, and which Geoffrey was pleased to be allowed to leave with him.

‘Adieu, then, my friend,’ he said, as Geoffrey rose to take his leave. ‘When you return to England, and—to Pitt, be advised, and remain. Remain amongst your great compatriots, your philosophers. Wade no more in these troubled waters. Listen, in your ear—I say nothing. I even know nothing! But—the air, my son’—his round red face growing serious, and his eyes

quite wistful—‘the air is full of particles, and these particles,’ in a mysterious whisper, ‘are fiends—demons ! The diable is abroad ! Grimeau, for example : he was not content ; he coveted power as well as money. He was, I am told, a villain. He broke loose and wore the tricolour, and became a tribune. But he was done to death. Death is to be the portion of so many ! But, for my part, that I never will submit to ! A word in your ear. I fear nothing—I have a friend !’ The Abbé winked both eyes together, in what he intended to be a very knowing manner. ‘I think,’ he said, after a moment’s pause, ‘and I expect, that they will leave an old man alone, who has hurt no one, and who knows nothing but his Latin. But—I am also of the noblesse—and, *mort de ma vie*, those canaille hands shall *never* grasp my throat, nor drag me, living, to the lanterne ! I have a friend who will save me from this death of a dog ; who will give me sleep—a little sooner, but

what matter? No, no; Grimeau's fate! Never!" with an expressive shrug and wave of the hand; 'adieu! adieu!'

Geoffrey turned away, sad and sorry. He had liked the Abbé, and been greatly amused at his transparent avoidance of all discussion of burning questions, his naïve egotism, and his affectation of ignorance of events. As he left the apartment, and was about to descend to the hall to join his uncle, he suddenly encountered the small trim shape and black eyes of the waiting-maid, who was now almost the only servant left in the deserted Château, where grooms and lackeys had been wont to throng, and coquettish tirewomen and femmes de chambres of madame to flutter about the old rooms. She looked as if she desired to speak, and Geoffrey, always courteous and considerate to dependents, paused at the head of the staircase to ask her if she wanted anything. It was a bright, pleasant, clever face, and struck him agreeably, as, flushing

all over, she said, in a respectful, but eager, way :

‘ Is monsieur, then, returning to Paris ?’

‘ Yes ; to Paris.’

‘ Is monsieur—does monsieur hear any tidings—of—mademoiselle ?’

Geoffrey looked up.

‘ I have not as yet seen Mademoiselle de Boisfontaine ; I am from England. But I have the hope of returning to Paris, where I shall endeavour to find her.’

‘ Mademoiselle—is she, then, in good health, and without trouble ?’

‘ I trust that she is both,’ said Geoffrey gravely ; ‘ but——’

‘ Monsieur would say that, in these days, who can tell ? Nevertheless’—this was said with great volubility and eagerness—‘ nevertheless, I swear to monsieur that mademoiselle has at least one heart truly devoted to her at Boisfontaine ! Mademoiselle is an angel ! Mademoiselle is—ah, ciel ! I can say no more ! Nevertheless,

she has one faithful heart to call her own, come what will !

‘That,’ said Geoffrey, raising his hat as he spoke, ‘that, on the faith of an Englishman, shall be the message I will carry to Mademoiselle de Boisfontaine from her old home. Judge if she will forget it ! *She* will not forget,’ he said, looking back, as he slowly descended the stairs ; and, unable to resist the joy of linking his name with hers, even thus, he added, ‘Neither shall I !’

He put a gold piece into the girl’s hand as he went down, and, with a freer step and a lighter heart, felt glad to think that there was some spark of truth still left in France, though only in the breast of a little soubrette.

As Geoffrey stood under the portico watching the carriage drive up, and noticing that the horses were now reduced to two, he could not help observing another indication of the times. A thin piece of tissue-paper had been fastened over each panel

where the coat-of-arms, with all its proud quarterings, had been wont to shine in heraldic pomp. He took his place beside the Marquis in a surprised and angry mood—angry that the nation should have power to inflict these petty insults on the old noblesse, and surprised that they should have the folly to do it.

As they drove along through the misty lanes and roadways hung with the last lingering leaves of autumn, talking of one thing and another so interesting to each, the Marquis invited Geoffrey to make his home with him whilst he remained in Paris : pathetically adding, that although he could not offer him, in his reduced estate, all that he had been accustomed to offer to his guests in better times, he could only lay his hand upon his breast and say, ‘*de tout mon cœur*’—the ancient motto of Boisfontaine. And Geoffrey—so easily in youth elated by hope, and lulled into golden dreams by the very buoyancy of its spirits—began to indulge in

visions the most illusory : thinking how he should at last see Toinette, and how he would atone for all that had passed ; craving only to be received on the old brother and sister terms that had made their life so happy at Leigh ; and picturing how, in some blest moment, spent in her sweet society, he should once more win back her confidence and trust—the while his companion, heavy with care and grief at the chaos he left behind him at Boisfontaine, slept uneasily by his side, worn out with trouble. And the labouring wheels of the coach, with its two old horses, seemed almost worn out too.

At length they reached Paris, and drove straight to the house near the Tuileries. And here a sudden shock awaited Geoffrey, which was to dispel once for all his golden dreams. A letter forwarded from the British Embassy awaited his arrival. ‘ Urgent ’ was written upon it, underlined, and in his mother’s hand. He tore it open, and was unable to repress an exclamation of

grief and dismay when he read in it a pressing summons to England—to Leigh, if he desired to see his father alive.

Poor Geoffrey ! It was a crisis in his life, and one of intensest pain. To stay in Paris, to watch events, to serve, to protect, and secretly to worship her whom in his inmost heart he fondly loved, to be at hand in time of need—this was what he had thought and hoped to do. But his father, whom he also loved with all the fulness of a strong deep nature, who had been his friend as well as his parent—the generous, noble father whom he so revered as well as loved—lay dying. Again, he thought of his mother, of the dear old grandmother, both looking to him in this extremity. He could not hesitate, nor did he.

One last indulgence he allowed himself. He wrote to Antoinette. He told her all that he had seen, all that the visit to Boisfontaine had been to him—that visit so often talked of and planned between them,

he did not say how differently. And he gave her the message he had promised should reach her, from the faithful little maid. Finally, he impressed upon her that in any case, or at any time, there would be for her, and for *all* (he underlined this generous expression of an unselfish devotion) whom she might bring with her, an English home, and an English welcome, at Leigh.

And so Geoffrey Leigh bade farewell to her and to France, little, indeed, imagining under what circumstances he would return.





CHAPTER XXXVIII.



URING the early months of the year 1791 it became daily more evident that the Revolution was no mere rebellion of the capital. It was a terrible fact all over the kingdom. The lords and seigneurs in every district were made to feel it. Their houses were destroyed and sacked, fire and sword marched through the land, noblesse and gentry were driven to the towns for shelter, and already massacres and executions were frequent, even in cities remote from Paris. There were no more breathing-times at St. Cloud. The royal family were now undisguisedly prisoners in

the palace of the Tuileries. La Fayette still played at governing the people through the National Guard. The Comte de Provence still lingered in Paris, and until that fated June 23rd kept to himself in the Luxembourg. Times without count, friends at home and relatives abroad planned the escape of the royal family. Whether any of these were really practicable, or might have been successful, God only knows. But they were not tried. The royal failing of indecision, and that conscious honesty of purpose which, intending no ill, could not realize that ill was intended—that obstinate conviction that while the King was at his post, the post was capable of defence—all combined to keep him where he was. But at length events grew to such a pitch that even the King could no longer bear the strain, or resist the entreaties of those around him. The Queen, always for action, as the King was for passive endurance, added her entreaties to her influence, and

succeeded. Then began to be clearly seen the incapacity, misjudgment, and ignorance of friends, the treachery of enemies, the selfishness of dependents.

At this distance of time, with our complete knowledge of the whole, we are amazed, too, at the blindness, the judicial blindness, which dimmed the eyes and intellects even of the loyal. It appears inexplicable. For instance, besides many who were suspected by the Royalists in places about the palace, there was at least one person in the Queen's immediate train who was known to have perceived that flight was in contemplation. Madame de Boisfontaine had seen her prying into the Queen's secrets. Madame Campan had found her doing the same. The Queen was made aware of it. Yet this woman had a duplicate key which admitted her at all hours to the private apartments in which the arrangements were chiefly made. The King, too, had his secret. He was having an iron closet, with an impos-

sible lock—in itself a masterpiece—built into a private room. Great mystery was observed about this iron safe; and no one was aware of it, except a man named Duclôt, once mate to the King's blacksmith—a sinister-looking, grimy man, with one eye, coarse-featured, shock-headed, large-framed; a man who spoke little, and took note of everything; a man whom the bonhomie and condescension of the King impressed only in one way—the gigantic wickedness he was guilty of in hiding from the people secrets which ought to be their secrets; and the drollery and folly of him in imagining that he, Duclôt, would not tell, at the first chance of doing so, everything which he had perjured his soul by swearing to conceal to the death.

Again, with respect to the preparations for this flight. The idea was that the royal family should be conveyed to the frontier, and there placed in safety, where it was hoped that the troops would rally round the

King's standard. But to accomplish this, the most elaborate provisions were considered necessary, stretching altogether over a period of six months. A carriage must be built on purpose. Not so much for speed, lightness, or unobtrusive plainness, as to be large enough to contain six grown people and two children ; of such a calibre as royalty, even in disguise, might travel in, without too much unseemly crowding or inconvenience—a carriage, therefore, of special design, and which the coach-builder, at least, must have understood to be planned with a purpose. Four horses, not less, could be capable of dragging this ponderous vehicle, so freighted ; and it could not be built in less than six months.

Another idea was propounded by the Queen. In case of accidents unforeseen—we may suppose during the journey—the Queen wished to send away her diamonds and other valuables to the care of her sister. A special dressing-case must be prepared, under

circumstances and pretexts of the shallowest. This also was surrounded with a transparent veil of mystery, which drew sinister attention to it. So the Queen was sending her valuables out of the kingdom! Doubtless to pay the hire of foreign troops. This must be looked to! Again, as equipment for the travellers, large quantities of linen and clothing must be stored in ready to be packed into the great berline. It might be possible to buy it in small quantities, and by degrees, during those six months of preparation; but how conceal it from people who had keys to open all doors at all hours, and who were not ignorant of anything in which the Queen gave orders, or had a part?

Altogether, it is impossible to conceive how any of those who thus planned that ill-starred expedition could for one moment imagine that it was being done without attracting suspicion. That flight to Varennes! Who can read of it without feeling,

even now, some of the breathless excitement, the pity, the grief which those must have experienced who conducted it, and acted in it, that day? But what of the capture, the return—that terrible backward route of ignominy, shame, and suffering, which lasted through eight days of almost unequalled misery, amidst heat and dust, and tumult and reproach? There was no mask upon the face of the People from that day forward; and there was time during that journey for the most hopeful of the royal captives to learn its awful features by rote.

We know all this by heart, and every other detail recorded of that long agony, the death-struggle of the most splendid of the kingdoms of Europe. Yet time and knowledge cannot dim the interest of that time.

After the royal family were captured and brought back, they never again tasted even the comparative sweets of liberty; but all

through that year, and until the middle of the next, were prisoners with the inevitable end before them. The high, proud spirit of the Queen, the endurance of the King, the holy life and character of Madame Elizabeth, each, like a choice jewel in process of cutting and polishing for its supreme use, was being prepared for the setting of no earthly crown. And in such wise passed the time until the evening of the 9th August, 1792.

On that evening Antoinette de Boisfontaine entered her father's room. She found him sitting with his arms spread on the table before him, and his face hidden in his hands. He had not heard her gentle tap at the door; he did not hear her enter, or see her when she had entered, until she came forward and laid her hand upon his arm.

‘My dear father,’ she said, in her soft, low voice.

The Marquis started up in a state that

plainly showed how events were shaking and distressing him.

‘How is she? Madame your mother, my dear, how is she?’

‘My mother sleeps now, and is quite calm. It was the terrible events of this day which have so entirely overcome her. After this slumber the worst will be over for a time. What now remains? Are there any orders or any directions for us?’

‘Truly; I have mine, and they are pressing. I must leave you both, but it is on my royal master’s business.’

‘What! leave us! Leave my mother! Leave her so desolate and so shaken! What is this, dear father? Tell me.’

The Marquis began to pace the apartment in great anxiety and distress, and it was not until the most earnest pressure was put on him that he said:

‘Antoinette, you are my counsellor. I have no secrets of my own from you. But

this is the King's, the last with which he has done me the honour to charge me. Behold, since you will have it so! This,' showing her a very small portfolio, or case of fine green leather, in which were two pockets ingeniously contrived, one inside the other—'this, my daughter, contains two or three papers which we do not wish to destroy, and yet which it is of the utmost consequence to place in safety before to-morrow is over. I intend to ride with them this night to Boisfontaine. The one place of which I am secure is the niche behind the altar in my oratory. As yet Boisfontaine stands intact. The letters, the messages, the threats which I receive so frequently, have as yet come to no effect. We cannot calculate all chances, but I shall at least put this to the proof. And it must be at once?' he added, with sudden decision. 'So long as the King's commission is kept secret, and faithfully discharged, I care not. To-morrow might divulge it, and La Fayette

will not favour *us*! Farewell. Say to your mother——’

‘Stay, my dear father,’ said Antoinette, clasping his hand in hers. ‘This is a time when we women may well share all the risk, and all the glory. I am prepared for all. *I* go to Boisfontaine. Listen: if the King sends for you, and you are at Boisfontaine? What then?’

A new life seemed to leap all at once into the expression of her face as she spoke. She had been lately so depressed and saddened. It is so hard to the young to be patient, to suffer silently; in short, to endure. Action brings hope, and hope is happiness to energetic natures.

‘Give me this packet, my father,’ she said, taking it gently but firmly into her own hand. ‘You know,’ she added, with a tone and manner which he had no power to resist, ‘I have my—my orderly—my body-guard? You doubtless remember the good soldier whom Monsieur le Vezécque sent to

be of use in such times of emergency? He is always at my orders, and *la bonne* can find him. There is no time to be lost; these summer nights are all too quickly past.'

The Marquis could not speak. His two hands fell down by his side underneath his lace ruffles, helpless. A blank horror came over him; his face grew white. What! Toinette go to Boisfontaine! to that nest and centre of disaffection! Toinette traverse those roads alone! It could not be! The carriage, for example, would arrest attention! The servants would ask each other questions—possibly would refuse to attend her! Then as to the Château, a few days ago certainly it was intact, but who could tell from day to day what had happened? And if she reached it, was the Abbé de Vertprés any protection? Were the walls, and roofs, and doors, and locks, of any avail in these days? No, no! It could not be! At all costs, and at all hazards, he himself must go, and at once.


Somehow, whilst he was arguing thus with himself, Toinette had slipped away. He now missed her from his side. The slow, pompous manners of his day rendered it as impossible to Monsieur le Marquis to hurry, even in so vital a moment, as it had been for the sovereigns he served to hasten themselves on that terrible night, when another half-hour of friendly darkness might have saved the fortunes of France. Great indeed was his helpless astonishment when, on advancing to the door, he opened it to confront Toinette ! Yes, Toinette ; disguised in a long cloak, and wrapt from head to foot in a fashion unknown in the King's household, but good, without doubt, for the present service. The energy of her youth was too much for the cumbrous solemnity of his age. With one farewell, and the blessing she asked for and he mechanically gave, she was gone ; and with her, he felt, all that was left of motive-power in his life. He sank back in his chair half bewildered,

half unconscious, wholly incapable of any thought or effort for that night. Ah! that eventful night! What dire or what happier fortune would the morrow bring?





CHAPTER XXXIX.

T was truly characteristic—so to say, truly French—that even in those days, when every province of France was bleeding and torn by the claws of the revolutionary Tiger, only such as were themselves or in the persons of their kinsfolk suffering from its ravages realized that it would, without doubt, come their way. Even then there were people who did not in the least believe that its fangs would ever close upon them. It was like hearing of a terrible storm or the visitation of some ghastly epidemic in the newspaper, or elsewhere. They were very

sorry for the misfortunes of those others, and would gladly help them in their trouble; but it was a long way off as yet.

It was hardly daylight. The Abbé de Vertprés still slept the sleep of the comfortable. Catullus was under his pillow, in case he should wake up inclined for reading, before it was time to rise. The old Château slept; and the few left within its walls slept too. The earth also slept, and the denizens of its woods and fields were still sleeping, when a horse's feet, muffled in the dewy grass that was creeping in these bad times nearer and nearer to the middle of the road, stopped at the outermost gate of the demesne. This horse carried two riders; and it had come at great speed, for the foam was on its bridle and its steaming flanks. A man in a nondescript mongrel kind of garb, wearing the tricolour, dismounted, and then a slight figure, muffled in a cloak, slid down to the earth, not accepting his support or his help. As her little feet touched the

ground a faintness came over Antoinette, for she it was—the faintness of exhaustion and fatigue. The journey was nothing in her father's coach ; but in the dead of night, without previous preparation, in charge of a State paper of importance, and without anyone to consult or trust to, or look to in any way, that road had seemed never-ending. She staggered forward, and almost fell against the tired horse before she had recovered herself. At length she said :

‘ I will enter alone. Do you take your horse to the outskirts of the wood yonder. An old verderer, a servant of my father's, lives just at the entrance to the beech-grove ; you will find it by following this path. He is old, and, I think, faithful.’

‘ And where, or at what time, shall I await mademoiselle's return ?’ said the foster-brother of De Vezécque, now in the service of General La Fayette, though always mademoiselle's ‘ faithful and devoted.’

‘ Here ; and at ten o’clock this evening,’ said Antoinette, dismissing him with a few gracious words, and feeling, as she did so, that she should be devoutly thankful when that return journey to Paris was over. She never had, and never could, bring herself to see this foster-brother and devoted servant of De Vezécque’s with his partial eyes. She did not like his face, she did not like his manner. She knew he was a ‘ patriot,’ which explained most things, but she wondered what else he was. However, he had attended strictly to her orders, and had brought her safely here, so she dismissed him from her thoughts as she had dismissed him from her presence, and, treading softly and swiftly, entered the court-yard by that archway leading out to the river, which she knew so well. She was not afraid of meeting anyone. There were no horses to be tended now, in the great roomy stables ; no grooms to loiter there ; no servants to be early afoot

amongst the deserted offices. The paved court-yard seemed cushioned over with moss and weeds, and her light tread waked no echo. But there was one living creature there whose ear and instinct were not deceived, and who approached her, but in silence. Sancho, the old house-dog, no longer chained, but from habit preferring to haunt the kennel where he had lived so long, crept along the ground to her feet. But, old and worn out, the joy was too great for him ; he lurched against her, feebly tried to lick her hand, and, rolling over, died as he lay. This was Antoinette's welcome. She had no time to linger, for the night had wings, and the first faint indication of the new day was coming in the east. She had no time to weep, but she thought how sad it seemed to be thus met by Death upon the very threshold of her home ; and tears were in her eyes as she felt in the darkness for the body of the faithful dog, to touch it with a last caress.

Painfully and wearily, much depressed by this incident, Antoinette made her way under the great walnut-tree, and so to the terrace. What centuries ago it seemed since she and her betrothed husband had walked here, and he had gone to follow the path of honour, to bring back the Star-spangled banner, that he might plant it beside the *Oriflamme* of France ! Where was he now ? Would he still be of the same mind if he could know all ? On the terrace all was dark ; but it was the darkness of a summer night, carrying in her arms the already new-born day. She must not be seen outside the building by any prying eyes. She made direct for the turret door, of which she had not forgotten to provide herself with the key. The key was old and stiff and rusty ; it was with the greatest difficulty that she could turn it. At last she found herself inside ; and carefully closing and relocking the low iron-bound door behind her, she felt comparatively safe.

Up the winding steps she hurried, and pushing open the door at the top of the stairs, she found herself within the oratory.

There was a pale gray glimmer in the little chamber, hardly to be called dawn, but enough to show her the situation of the altar. Her strength rose with the demand upon it. She moved aside the altar, found the hidden spring, and opening the stone panel, placed the King's packet in the hollow it revealed, and carefully and perfectly closed it again. Then, drawing back to their place the heavy old hangings, she restored the altar and its sacred furniture to the state in which she had found them, and felt that her task was done. Filled with a devout thankfulness, she knelt down to give praise to God, commending her soul to Him, and into His safe keeping, at this dangerous crisis of events, all those most dear to her. She was so rapt and earnest in her prayer, that she seemed, for the moment, transported above the dangers and miseries that were

thronging into her life. A peaceful, happy calm stole into her heart, and took possession of it. The burthen seemed to be lifted from her young shoulders as by Angel hands; and her mind was at rest. Before she was aware of it, the fatigue and faintness of the anxious journey overpowered her, and sinking down with her head upon the altar stair, she fell asleep.





CHAPTER XL.



OW long Antoinette slept she could not tell ; but she awoke with a sensation of horror upon her, very unlike the happy calm in which she had fallen asleep. Starting up, she found the full broad daylight sending many-coloured shafts of light through the little window of the oratory, and Jacques Duclôt bending over her with a savage grin upon his repulsive face.

‘ So ! The little owl has flown back to the old belfry ! I knew it ! I know everything that the wind whispers ; and the Bois-fontaine woods told me that the citoyenne

was here. There are more keys than one to most places. And the locks of the world,' spreading out his coarse, grimy hands, 'are open to the tribunes of the people !'

Here he adjusted the tri-coloured scarf which hung across his shoulder, and shook himself with a sort of clumsy self-importance.

Antoinette sprang to her feet, and, as far as possible, out of reach of the monster. The first instant of bewilderment at this terrible awakening had passed while he was speaking. Her courage rose. All the proud blood in her veins rushed as it were to arms. She stood before him brave, as she had stood that other day in the corridor at Versailles. With all her calm courage she was so simple, so sweet in her purity and goodness, that a strange flash of feeling, as if he could have worshipped her as a saint, streamed across his dark soul. Then, as if the very light had shown him his own depravity, an intense,

passionate desire to destroy her took possession of him. A malignant pleasure in his own strength and her weakness made him dally with the temptation to kill her where she stood. He was accountable to no one ; he could destroy her when and how he pleased. But, first, he would torment the victim so completely in his power.

‘ Who sent thee here ? ’ he said, in a loud, stentorian voice.

No answer.

‘ I demand of thee, in the name of the Nation,’ shaking the end of his scarf in her face, ‘ the errand that brought thee here ? ’

No answer from the white lips. No quailing in the steadfast eyes.

‘ Behold ! The blood of aristocrats without number is on these hands of mine. Judge, then, what vengeance I shall take on thee ! Traitress ! Fatherless and motherless daughter of traitors ! ’

No answer yet, though this last shot

pierced deeply. They, then, were gone to heaven already, before her !

‘What, no answer ?’ he cried, his wicked face ablaze with evil passions. ‘Speak, and that instantly ! Who sent thee hither ? On what errand didst thou come ? Or I swear——’ In his rage he laid one hand upon her mantle, and, snatching a knife from his girdle with the other, would have forced her to her knees. She sprang backward from his grasp, leaving her cloak in his hand, and, uttering one long piercing shriek, clung with all her strength to the altar, where so lately she had knelt in peace and in prayer, resolving to die thus ; when, before he could rush upon her with uplifted knife, the door of the Marquis’s room was suddenly thrown wide open, and the Abbé de Vertprés stood on the threshold.

‘Coward ! Canaille ! Monster !’ he ejaculated. ‘This, then, is your liberty, and your fraternity, and—and your equality ! Bah !’

The Abbé was a remarkable sight to see ; and the suddenness of his appearance took even Duclôt by surprise. He was a man, as we know, of some size. He wore his soutane as usual, but his head was crowned with the red cap of liberty, pushed well back, and a trifle on one side, and from beneath it his round red face shone out with amazing lustre. In his plump white hand was a leather-bound volume, in which his forefinger, held between the leaves, marked the place where his studies had been broken off.

With a quickness and dexterity quite unaccountable, and before the clumsy Duclôt, wholly taken aback, had time to recover himself, the Abbé whirled him across the floor to the open doorway by which he had stolen in ; and as he stooped his shock head, in some involuntary movement, with outspread hands, to save himself from the low stone lintel, he received so smart a blow on the back of the neck from the leather-bound volume of Catullus, that, stunned by the

pain, and missing his footing, he plunged down the steep turret winding-stairs, the sheer momentum of his own weight and clumsiness causing him to rebound from wall to wall in his descent ; and, unable to recover himself, he tumbled out at full length upon the terrace.

‘ À bas les tyrans ! ’ shouted the Abbé down the staircase, with a provoking chuckle in his voice, as, hastening to profit by the discomfiture of the enemy, he pushed to the door, and, with some labour and fumbling, fastened the lock, and placed across it the iron bar, which, had Antoinette remembered it, might have saved her the agony of this terrible scene.

‘ For the present, at least ! for the present ! ’ muttered the Abbé to himself, as he stooped to pick up his beloved Catullus, and feeling on the whole a good deal surprised at his own prowess. For a moment he stood reviewing the entire incident in his mind with a sort of beaming self-congratu-

lation, when he suddenly remembered Toinette, and turning round, saw with much distress and perplexity that she had fainted.

Stepping back into the adjoining room, he opened the door upon the great staircase, and called ‘Margot ! Hither, Margot !’

Almost immediately a young girl appeared, with a tri-coloured rosette in her cap.

‘Margot,’ said the Abbé, stooping a little forward, and gravely addressing her, ‘thou hast learned a good many trades under my teaching, since thy mother kept house for me before she died. Thou hast been cook, housekeeper, valet, and librarian. Thou shalt now add *femme de chambre* to that list. Thou art a good girl, Margot, and thou must yet further deserve my praise. Help me—come hither and see, Margot—help me, I say, to lift this poor foolish child into some place where she may rest and recover. Surely beneath her father’s roof she

ought to find a shelter somewhere ! Where can we lay her down, Margot ? eh ? Tell me what am I to do ? Margot, I say ? cried the Abbé, getting desperate, and shuffling about in an access of irritable inefficiency round Toinette's prostrate form, as if he did not quite know where to begin, or what to do. 'Here I am ! I know nothing ! These things are too much for me ! I—I—I am not in any way accustomed to—to—in short, I know nothing ! And I can and will do nothing ! Voilà tout !'

'Ah, the bon Dieu ! It is mademoiselle ! Oh ! the pity of it ! the sadness !'

'No words, Margot ! Do thou hasten ! She must rest in the apartment of the Marquise, and thou must look to her. For me, I shall await thy report ; and I shall remain here in the Marquis's writing-room. Margot, I say, what am I to do ?'

'Monsieur—that is—I will obey in everything ; only let me wait upon this

angel !' said Margot eagerly. 'And she must want careful tending.'

'And food, Margot ; see to it, my girl,' said the Abbé, retreating, with a full sense of relief and reprieve.





CHAPTER XLI.



WHEN Antoinette recovered her senses, she found herself lying on a bed, with rich curtains drawn round it of a colour and fashion which she knew well. And raising herself to draw back the one nearest to her, she found herself confronted by a shrewd, brown-complexioned, eager-eyed face, with a peasant's cap above it, into which was fastened the tri-coloured rosette, without which no good patriot or person of respectable sentiments was ever seen abroad.

‘Mademoiselle—eat, then, I pray you, dear mademoiselle ! Citoyenne, I ought to

say—but—by the soul of my mother, for example—it is not possible! This, again, is truly some of Monsieur l'Abbé's own wine, which he insists—yes, absolutely insists that mademoiselle shall drink! For me, I am—Margot.'

Feeling the need that might occur, and the want of all her strength, Antoinette asked no questions, and took what was offered her without a word. She did not know what might be lurking on the other side of those curtains, or who else might be in the house.

'Who is—Margot?' she asked at length. 'Someone whom I ought to know?'

'Do not fear, then,' said the girl. 'This' (pointing to her rosette, and speaking low) —'this, which I hate, detest, spit upon! I wear it for the sake of mademoiselle.'

Seeing a somewhat amused, or perhaps incredulous, smile creep out over Antoinette's white face, she hastened to add in a shamefaced way, that yet had something appealing in it:

‘Truly, if mademoiselle will have patience with me, I am the sister of Dorine. I—Margot. To me it was that mademoiselle once gave bonbons ! And, again, money—for my mother !’

‘Dorine’s little sister !—with the sick mother ?—Margot ?’ said Antoinette in a slow recollecting voice, as she lay back on her pillows. All passed in review before her, and she again saw Margot in the yew-hedge walk, by the rosary—dressed in rags—watching the fate of a white pullet—weeping for Dorine, and for Joseph, the lame brother.

Margot was greatly altered since those days, and, truth to say, greatly improved. She was now as tall as Antoinette, with a keen clever face, and eyes that were both fearless and honest.

‘If mademoiselle will lie down and rest, whilst rest is possible,’ she said, ‘I will say how long I have hoped for and expected the coming of this day.’

‘Why, then, Margot,’ said Antoinette kindly, ‘come near and tell me all. Where is thy mother, who was sick? Where are all the people I once knew? Where, for example, is Grimeau? Is it true that—that—he died?’

For a moment Margot’s eyes shone and glittered—nay, flashed.

‘Maître Grimeau,’ she answered slowly, ‘he was Maire, Maire of Boisfontaine, with Pont-au-dix. Conceive it, mademoiselle! But ah! his tri-coloured scarf, his patriot words, his fierceness against Père le Maître (who would not take the oath), and his vapourings about burning down the Château—all these went and came as the wind. Joseph is municipal now. Yes! Then it arrived that Joseph and the rest—they hunted him through the demesne. Into the woods, out into the fields—like wolves they hunted him. The fourth day they found him in a cave, half starved. They brought him into the village. I was a little sorry; but then

he was a scélérat—a wicked, cruel oppressor of us, the poor. Monsieur le Marquis never knew, that I always swear to ; but Grimeau, he ground down the poor. He beat, and starved, and grew rich and fat : and he died the death of a dog ! “A la lanterne !” was the cry : and I will not sicken mademoiselle with the rest.’

After a shuddering silence, Antoinette said :

‘And thy mother, Margot ?’

Then Margot, desiring no better, hastened to tell her story. She knew the village secrets, and she had come daily to wait on the Abbé, and to bring him the news since her mother’s death, who had, as Margot said, spent her latter days as housekeeper, or, rather, woman of all work, in the Château, when no servants remained any longer to keep things going.

‘As for Monsieur l’Abbé, he is truly grand,’ said Margot, throwing up hands of admiration. ‘He reads ; he sleeps ; he awakes ; he writes ; he is without fear

absolutely. He is aristocrat altogether—yes, and altogether superb. He hears all that I say—all that is done in other châteaux, for example ; but he asks nothing. He does not say, “Margot, are the patriots coming hither ?” or, “Margot, I shall emigrate if you bring me bad news to-morrow ;” or, “Margot, I must go to some safer place than Boisfontaine.” Yes ; he is truly grand, Monsieur l’Abbé ! Or else,’ said Margot naïvely, after a moment’s pause, ‘perhaps the bon Dieu has made him senseless, beforehand.’

Then she told Antoinette how her mother had died absolutely worn out by trouble, and by the effect of years of want and suffering.

“Margot,” she would say to me, “Boisfontaine is doomed—Château and demesne ! Terrible times are coming ; but remember that mademoiselle was good to us. In my death I bless her, and—I bless—thee, Margot ! Be true to mademoiselle.” I swore on the cross round her neck—it was

only a wooden one, but it was, nevertheless, a cross—I swore to help mademoiselle when the time should come : she then died. So my father and mother are dead. Joseph is in the council yonder. Alas !” said Margot, weeping, ‘it broke her heart when he killed Père le Maître with his own hand, in the chapel by the river : only it was broken before, because of Dorine ! And now I have not one in the world but mademoiselle, whom I love always, and for whom I will die !’

‘No, Margot,’ said Antoinette, ‘you give me new life ; embrace me, and dry thy tears. Talk not, then, of dying : thou shalt live, and help me to live—we will help each other !’





CHAPTER XLII.

NO one will imagine that Jacques Duclôt reached the bottom of the turret-stairs, with the Abbé's triumphant chuckle in his ears, without vows of vengeance and paroxysms of rage, which were fanned and fed by the sense of power. As he rose to his feet, and lurched forward through the gateway on to the terrace, the Evil One, anticipating his thirst for revenge, had provided to his very hand the materials wherewith to satiate it. He was met outside by a man evidently in search of him; a man in whose face the want of brain-power was counterbalanced by a ferocious animal

expression, as repulsive in its way as that of Duclôt himself. He was lame, one ankle being twisted out of its place. He came up to the valiant Tribune of the people, and appeared to communicate something of importance to him. Duclôt threw up his arms with a stentorian shout of satisfaction, smote the bringer of tidings on the shoulder with his ponderous hand, and cried out :

‘ Ha ! ha ! But thou art a patriot of the right sort, Joseph, my friend !’

They marched along the grand terrace, not as Jacques Duclôt had slunk across it that other day, with the lock of the turret door in his hand, to avoid shocking the goodly company by his grime and unfitness, but as if they were masters and owners of all—as they were. They talked loud, they gesticulated and laughed with malicious joy, and so vanished together through the side-entrance into that courtyard into which, in days not so long ago, six men had been wont to draw uphill, from the river, a cart laden

with water-barrels, they being yoked to the shafts like mules.

The place was empty when they entered it, but a sound came surging up from the village below of ominous import. It came nearer. The tramp of many feet ; something on wheels accompanying them ; fragments of songs, snatches of ' *Ça ira* ' and the ' *Marseillaise*,' which had already become a death-march ; yells and shouts, which were so exciting that Joseph, athirst for the sight, limped out beyond the gateway just as a procession of pitchforks, pikes, sticks and reaping-hooks, wielded by hands bent upon using them, appeared above the brow of the hill. Presently the courtyard was filled to overflowing by a clamorous rabble, escorting in their midst, with every mark of scorn and derisive insult, not unaccompanied by blows and prods from weapons thirsting for his blood, a prisoner, seated (fortunately for his life) in a cart, and so raised a little above the multitude.

‘To the castle! To the gateway! To the river! To the lanterne!’ was screamed and shouted in every key. When, equal to his exalted position, Jacques Duclôt, patriot, and Tribune of the people, leaped on a horse-block and cried in his stentorian voice :

‘Order! there must be order!’

‘And blood!’ screamed Joseph at his elbow. ‘Here, where I and the others were as beasts and asses before him! Here, where I fell, a cripple, and was beaten like a dog! Here I stand to-day, and I cry for blood!’

‘Seas of blood! Oceans of blood, citizen! Thou shalt have thy fill! Only—calm yourselves. There must be a trial.’

‘A trial! Vive Duclôt! A trial!’

‘Yes, brothers and citizens. The sovereign people do not murder. They execute. They are just. They are generous. They do all for the good of France, and the preservation of peace. To the castle! Advance, then, my citizen comrades, follow me!’

And so, by the sheer weight of his size and strength, he pushed himself to the head of the gaunt, wolfish, rabble crew, and led the way. Locks, as he had said, had many keys in the service of the Republic, and the stout oak doors of the Château Boisfontaine were flung inward as if by magic. The great empty hall, the polished staircase, the salons fitly furnished and hung with tapestry, saw such sights that day as in all their proud generations of exclusiveness they had not known or dreamed of. Mirrors, which had reflected the shapes of stately Boisfontaines rustling in brocades and velvets, and proud gatherings of the nobles of the land, and royalty itself, with all its pomps and splendour, were now starred and broken by rude hands, which knew only how to destroy. Pictures were cut down, girandoles shattered, furniture flung about ; everywhere the crash and shout and trampling of the mob, like fiends let loose, and none to withstand them.

Presently a voice cried out :

‘ Citizen Jacques ! here is another cunning lock for thy cunning hands ! Patriots are kept waiting ! The people are defied ! Aristocrats, without doubt, are hiding here from Justice.’

But before Duclôt had time to use his skilled fingers, or his sledge-hammer fist, the door flew open to his hands, and there stood before them the Abbé de Vertprés, and beside him, pale, quiet, and perfectly composed, Antoinette herself.

A sort of hush fell upon the surprised crowd, few of whom knew the Abbé even by sight, and none of whom were aware, until now, of Antoinette’s presence in the Château. They were standing together, side by side. In front of them was a long, polished table, and by an unperceived movement of someone in the crowd, Antoinette did not know how, or by whom, a second table was moved round to her left, so as to make a kind of barricade ; whether as a defence or as a trap, one cannot say.

Taking advantage of the situation, and clever enough to profit by it, Duclôt flung himself into a large chair in front of this group, and, in imitation of the leniency of the tribunal in Paris, and its magnanimous treatment of the arraigned, announced with all the air, voice and manner of a provincial Danton that the tyrant De Vertprés and the aristocratic daughter of the wicked Boisfontaine should have a formal trial.

At this juncture Margot (known to be a good patriot, and, in fact, proved to be so by the very presence of the citoyenne Boisfontaine) was summoned, and ordered to bring up wine and refreshments from larders filled with the spoils of the people, tithes of wine from rented vineyards, bread made from grain stolen from the people! Whatever was in those swelling butteries must furnish forth a meal. The noon was long past, the patriots were hungry and athirst.

‘Wine! Wine!’ was the cry. And

Joseph, seizing the first bottle from her hand, drained it on the spot, being imitated by every patriot who could secure one. Not content with which, and certain that their prey could not escape them, many of these wretches dispersed themselves over the castle searching for plate, or hidden liquor-bins, and casks of wine ; swearing in disappointed rage at the empty larders, the bare kitchens and butteries ; crashing, smashing, and destroying right and left in merest wanton destruction.

Thus, through the long hours of that hot August day, did the ruthless crowd make havoc of the old Château, and of everything precious and beautiful in it. And all that time did Duclôt keep at bay the murderous rabble, over whom his superior talent gave him the mastery, playing with his victims the while as a cat with a mouse.

With undaunted front and calm patience the two prisoners heard all, and spoke little.

At last the Abbé began to show signs of fatigue and irritability, and, as if unable any longer to refrain, he turned to Duclôt and said :

‘How long is this to last?’

Duclôt fixed upon him his malicious eye, and said :

‘Until Citizen Vertprés acknowledges the sovereignty of the people, and reveals the hiding-place of the tyrant De Salis.’

‘De Salis!’ said the Abbé, who knew nothing whatever as to the movements of his nephew, except that he was supposed to be safe amongst the émigrés abroad, but who would not for worlds have owned to it, if he had known. ‘De Salis? My nephew and I do not meet. I am an old man. I love books. I know nothing. I hear nothing. Does the country require my blood for these offences? Take it. I am afraid of none of you! But,’ waving his white hand towards Antoinette, ‘if France is to be great—if patriots are to be great—if citizens of the Republic are to

be great, and to earn the praise of history, let them spare women and children !

‘ There is reason in it ! ’ said a voice somewhere in the background.

‘ He is a priest,’ said another ; ‘ it is death to priests ! ’

‘ He is not a priest,’ said a third. ‘ He a priest—ignorant ! Look at his bonnet rouge ! He is a Republican ! a good patriot ! ’

‘ A patriot ? Behold him ! See his proud looks ! He is aristocrat to the heart ! ’ said an inebriate and hiccoughing citizen close by.

‘ Yes,’ said the Abbé, adjusting his spectacles, and looking through them at the crowd, his round face and plump figure standing out with a dignity never before seen in them. ‘ Yes. Behold me ! Though an aristocrat, a patriot ! And though a prisoner, not afraid of any one of you ! ’

‘ We shall see—we shall see ! ’ cried Duclôt, entirely in his element. ‘ Bring in the other prisoner ! ’

There was a scuffle under the portico, and much confusion of muttered curses, threats and yells, not without sounds of blows, and clatter of pikes and muskets; when, to the horror of Antoinette, a torn, white, blood-smeared figure, more dead than alive, bound hand and foot, and covered with dust, was dragged, and pushed, and buffeted into the middle of the hall. It was only after a moment's breathless suspense that she recognised in this miserable wreck her brother, Armand de Salis. With a cry of horror she flew past the Abbé, and before she could be prevented threw her arms round the fainting form, and, with an almost superhuman effort, dragged it behind the entrenchment of the table, and half lifted, half supported it into a chair near where the Abbé stood: a chair—alas! she remembered it then—in which she had often seen her mother sitting, gay and charming, bending over her tambour-frame.

She stood before him — she, a girl, a

woman, in danger every moment of her own life, expecting death, with every cruel adjunct, at any turn of affairs ; she, whom he ought to have been able to protect ; she, so brave, unselfish, and strong, and he so poor and mean a creature, taken in the act of flying from his country, forsaking his King, betraying his order, willing to sell his soul for bare life, crying for mercy between every sob of pain ! A true type of the tyrant, arrogant in power, base and miserable in danger ; a tyrant not peculiar alone to France then, nor to aristocrats of any race or any country ; but characteristic of vice, and evil, and meanness, in every rank, in every country in the world.

Joseph, from behind the great man's chair, saw his prey as it were snatched from him, and with a howl of vengeance, and regardless of all but that master-passion, levelled his musket ; and had Armand de Salis been the size of any ordinary man, instead of the wisp of humanity that he was,

he had never uttered another moan or felt another pang. The bullet split the chair he sat in just above his head, and lodged in the wall behind him. Antoinette stood erect and composed. The shot passed close to her, but she, merged in her woman's instinct of defending the weak, forgot to be afraid.

‘Countrymen ! Citizens !’ she cried. ‘Is this, then, the trial we were to have at patriot hands ?’

Whether her voice, pitched in a key so different to the voices of the paysans who surrounded her, aroused Duclôt ; whether the sight of her narrow escape from his hands by death moved him to anger ; or whether the audacity in a subordinate of thus forestalling ‘justice’ frenzied him, who can say ? Certain it is that he turned with savage fury on his lieutenant, and felled him to the ground.

At that moment there was a cry from without : the sound of horses’ feet, a

mounted detachment of national guards, some in uniform, some in plain clothes, some in costumes of every kind and texture. The commanding officer rode into the porch, and summoned Duclôt to speak with him. He showed him a paper signed with the names of Pétion and Barrère, and by one other name whose magic had not yet wholly faded—that of La Fayette—ordering that all the inhabitants of Château Boisfontaine, born of that name, should be given up to the custody of the Nation, to be imprisoned and arraigned at the bar of the Convention, for crimes and misdemeanours of which proofs were forthcoming.

With sullen acquiescence, and with bitter rage in his heart, did the baffled locksmith, like a tiger balked of his prey, turn upon the three whom he had a moment ago looked upon as his own. He cursed the folly of his delay, and the orgies of his band, who had been given up to madness and to plunder rather than to the work he had in

hand for them. The officer in command of the troop now dismounted, taking precedence of him in a decided and soldierly fashion which Duclôt could not resent, and which caused him to gnash his teeth and swear under his breath. Crossing the vast entrance hall, and marching to the door opening into the salon, the officer saw three figures: his heart seemed to stand still; it was a sight he could never forget. The Abbé de Vertprés stood a little in advance, wearing the cap of liberty, one hand in the cincture of his habit, the other holding a leather-bound book, and resting on the table before him. His round red face was grave, but there was no trace of fear in it; and Antoinette, in a white dress, with a cloak hanging loosely around her, which with one hand she was spreading forth as if to protect and hide a wretched figure huddled together on a broken chair, without covering for the head, without a coat, with torn silk stockings, stained with blood and

dust, upon thin, ill-covered legs. He went up to Antoinette, saying in a short tone of command :

‘The citoyenne will follow me.’

She knew him, as he knew her. But at so perilous a moment neither made any sign.

Turning his back upon the throng prowling around them, and not for one instant to be counted upon, he said in a low tone to the Abbé :

‘Escape, sir, while you can. I have an escort.’

‘Good patriot, I have my books. I hurt no one. I read ; I write ; and I have a friend ! I hold my courage in my two hands. Adieu, my niece ! Adieu !’

‘Save my unhappy brother !’ murmured Antoinette’s entreating voice.

For all answer De Vezécque, for he it was, seized her by the hand, and drawing the cloak round her, lifted her in his arms, and carried her forcibly through the snarling crowd, across the hall, into a carriage which

waited near, and at a sign the escort instantly closed round it. His soldier's eye, trained to observant keenness, had warned him of the danger of delay. Another instant, and even his uniform, his written order, and La Fayette's name would have been in vain to save her, and she would have been torn away from under the very blade of his sword.

Even now, not all his care and promptitude could avail to shut out from her strained senses sounds as well as sights. Not the hurry of wheels, the clash of arms, and the tread of the horses' feet, as they hurried her from the scene, could prevent her hearing a long, pitiful, agonized shriek, which rang through the old hall and seemed to follow her, as Duclôt, mad for vengeance, rushed wildly upon the poor, craven, cowering form, which yet lived and breathed in the place where she herself had stood forward to shelter him.

It was the death-cry of Armand de Salis.



Part IV.

THE STORM.





CHAPTER XLIII.



WHEN Antoinette arrived in Paris, she was driven along the streets by ways she knew nothing of. Her knowledge of the great city had been confined to the more immediate neighbourhood of the Tuileries. She was too much paralyzed and exhausted by the events of the past day to have asked any questions, even had it been possible to do so. But the instinct of self-repression, of such paramount necessity in those days, would have taught her to wait. Until De Vezécque took the initiative she had but to refrain from any sign of recognition.

At length the carriage stopped. The military escort was dismissed, and she was hastily conducted up several flights of steps to a small chamber under the roof; the door was closed and locked behind her, and she was left quite alone. She sat down, too dazed and wretched to be uneasy or afraid. The last ray of sunlight had faded from the highest point on the opposite houses; the twilight merged into dusk, and darkness was near at hand, when she heard a foot-step on the stairs, a low, respectful knock on the door, and the Marquis de Vezécque entered.

‘Ah, mademoiselle! Alas! that we should meet thus!’ he said, in a low voice, kissing her hand with as much respect as if she and he were still surrounded by all things fitting—as when they had last met and parted.

‘I owe my life to Monsieur le Marquis,’ she said simply. ‘But, my father—my mother—where are they? Is it indeed

true—what that terrible man said? Am I indeed fatherless—motherless?

And now, for the first time, tears flowed from the sad eyes which had looked that day upon such scenes of horror.

In earnest tones De Vezécque tried to comfort her, and in one word told her that those whom she asked for yet lived. He also told her that he had himself been three or four days in Paris, but under the strictest incognito. Such news, he said, had reached America by private sources, of the state to which royalty was reduced, that he had at once determined to return, intending to be at hand to help her and hers, and to stand beside La Fayette, whom he had believed all-powerful with the army, and whose interest he entirely counted upon for the friends he desired to serve. But on his arrival he found events rushing on like a tidal wave—impetuous, destructive. La Fayette had plainly confessed to him that he himself knew not from one day to

another where to turn or how to act. He had wrung the command of the little escort from him almost at the sword's point, he said, and had got the paper of summons with the three signatures to it almost by force, as it were. Gustav had ridden back straight from Boisfontaine to Paris to warn him of the state of things, and that if he desired to save the life of mademoiselle he had no time to lose ; for he had passed through the village, and seen enough of the disposition of the people. 'Moreover,' said De Vezécque, 'to-morrow those names may be worthless, and to appeal to them dangerous. Therefore, nothing short of the direct intervention of the Power above could have accomplished my purpose for me.'

Then, perceiving her anxiety, he added :

'And now I will tell you all, dear mademoiselle. Monsieur de Boisfontaine, accused of intriguing with the King to bring over the armies of foreign princes, of correspond-

ing with the émigrés, and of conspiring with the King against the Nation, was arrested this day, and sent to the prison of St. Lazare. Madame——'

'Tell me quickly!' cried Antoinette, in an agony, as he hesitated.

'Madame is safe. And—I come—to take mademoiselle to her mother.'

'Yes, yes! let us go!' she said, instantly rising. 'You are indeed good! You are indeed brave!'

'Brave!' he said. 'Nay, that is not the word. But loyal—loyal to the death! I came to devote myself to the safety of mademoiselle, and those whom she loves. And let me say only this one thing, for the first time, and, unless mademoiselle permits, for the last. My desire is to offer my name, and all that I possess—here, now, at this moment—to her whom I so truly adore. My name is not unknown as a patriot, here and abroad. I say this with humility, and with the idea that if made-

moiselle will accept it, it might shield her and hers—or——’

‘Oh, monsieur!’ said Antoinette, with great earnestness, and an entreating glance from her tear-dimmed, pleading eyes, which went to the very heart of her generous suitor, ‘but — not now! Not—not as things are! We will wait. We will pray for better times! So long as she is spared to me, and I to her, my place is with my mother. Monsieur will earn my entire and perfect gratitude if he will take me to her!’

And De Vezécque, gallant gentleman that he was, bowed his head in acquiescence; and then said, with profound sadness in his voice, yet with full and distinct intention :

‘I am at mademoiselle’s feet, and her wishes are mine.’

Then, urging her to wrap her large cloak round her so as to cover her dress and anything noticeable about her, he led the way,

and they descended together to the street. On their way, De Vezécque explained that he had not dared to take her direct to the house where Madame de Boisfontaine had found refuge with some relations of her *bonne*. He told her that he had taken the handful of men from La Fayette's staff without knowing whether he could trust any one of them, being quite aware that he, like most others, was surrounded by spies ; and that he had been obliged to wait for darkness before venturing to approach her. He told her how he had desired above all things, and at all risks, to go to the Tuileries immediately on his arrival from America, when he had intended to offer his services, through the Marquis de Boisfontaine, to the King ; that General La Fayette had distinctly forbidden him to stir out of his house, where he lay *perdu* awaiting events. Then, all at once, Gustav had appeared before him ; told him of *mademoiselle's* midnight ride ; how he himsel

had ridden at full speed back to Paris, in order to reveal what he had seen and heard; and that, if there was a chance for her life, he must go at once. The rest mademoiselle knew too well.

They had now arrived at a pastrycook's shop in a little remote street, far from any which Antoinette was acquainted with. They were expected, and waited for. It was no other than the *bonne* herself who answered De Vezécque's summons. She opened her arms, and wrapped Toinette in them, weeping.

'Adieu, then, dear mademoiselle,' said De Vezécque. 'I go; but it is to watch events. And I entreat mademoiselle to let me hear, through Gustav (who is now in the service of the State, but my devoted follower), of anything that may befall.'

'I promise,' said Antoinette, placing both her hands in his, and looking upward into his anxious face with a sweet, grave expression on her own. 'It is you, yourself,


monsieur, who have said "Duty must be our guiding star!" We shall on this point, at all hazards, think alike.'

'You are my better angel!' he said, as he turned to leave them.





CHAPTER XLIV.

NTOINETTE followed the bonne up a narrow staircase into a poor and shabby room. There, a sight awaited her which called for all her strength and all her fortitude to meet it. Madame la Marquise had that day been torn from her husband; that husband who, even in her youngest and loveliest days, when the Court was gay, and she one of its fairest ornaments, had had all her loyal regard. This day, too, she had been torn from the Queen, whom, to the best of her capacity, she had faithfully loved and served. The bonne had saved her when the royal family

had left the Tuileries and Monsieur le Marquis was arrested. Dragging the helpless Marquise, somehow or another, from the midst of the terrible fracas which ensued in the palace, the *bonne* herself could never quite remember how she contrived to get her through the streets to this house, the only refuge she knew of; where, in answer to her prayers and entreaties, her nephew and his wife had consented to receive them.

The Marquise lay prostrate on a little wretched bed in an upper room, her face disfigured by weeping, her dress disordered, and her whole appearance so altered that even Antoinette would hardly have known her. She threw herself into Toinette's arms, crying: 'Take care of me!—save me!' her whole frame shaken with hysterical sobs.

It was a strange cry from mother to daughter; but it did not surprise Antoinette. With a sudden flash of memory, she recalled a little old painting in her mother's room at Boisfontaine, of another mother and

daughter. It had had a strange fascination for her during her illness there, and her whole heart sprang up, as it were, to accept this idea of its meaning now. She took her mother, so broken and so pitiable in her low estate, into her arms, and held her to her own true heart. Nothing, nothing, she vowed within herself that instant, should part them one from the other—but death !

Every day something new and terrible happened. The royal family, including the saintly Madame Elizabeth (who might long since have been in safety abroad), were now lodged in the Temple. All former restraint and discipline were at an end, and license reigned in Paris. The street in which Antoinette and her mother had found refuge was, as we have said, out of the way of the immediate and more prominent scenes of revolutionary excitement. To Monsieur de Vezécque, who came most evenings with news from the outer world, that shabby little upper room seemed a paradise of

peace. Here—as he expressed it—he drew, as from a pure fountain, inspirations the noblest and most elevating. He even now, in the very face of events, believed in the theories of Roland, Vergniaud, and La Fayette—of all those, in fact, who talked of the glorious future of France. He held Camille Desmoulins to be an unselfish patriot, and read all his rhapsodies with the spirit of faith, forgetting that murder, rebellion, and anarchy are not the stepping-stones to liberty. So De Vezécque, like some few others, hoped against hope that the day of the amelioration of all things was coming.

But, alas for all such dreamers! the day of their awakening arrived first. One evening the Marquis appeared before Antoinette unusually and greatly depressed. Gustav had brought him tidings that day which affected him more even than he himself could have thought possible, and which, strange to say, he had never in any way taken into his calculation of events.

‘I wished only the happiness of France,’ he said to Antoinette; ‘I desired nothing for her people but good—the Liberty which I have seen achieved across the seas. I come home to find—what? The Evil One all powerful, and Liberty in chains! This day I have heard that my ancient home is burnt to the ground; that home,’ looking with sad eyes into Toinette’s sympathizing face, ‘to which I had hoped one day to take my wife!’

A long silence fell upon them.

‘Why, then, is it?’ he cried, starting up, and with more passion than she had known him betray—‘why are these things so? We are told that the people are now rising from long degradation, to punish those who have degraded and oppressed them. With us, it was never so. My father and his father were the most beneficent of seigneurs. And, for me, I have never been tried! I left my home, at eighteen, to fight for Liberty. Why should I and mine be so fiercely rooted out

of the land of our forefathers? Where, then, is right? where is truth? where are the virtues of freedom? the reward of true patriotism? For me, I am a beggar—a homeless, landless beggar! My inheritance is laid waste; my very title-deeds are burned to powder! When I asked the honour, the blessing, of mademoiselle's hand, I was heir to a great name, a vast demesne, and all that this world has to give. Content with these, I wished to share them with my dependents: so to rule and to live in my little corner of fair France as to bless all within my reach. This, with the object of my devotion to share it, was my dream of life. I now stand before mademoiselle this night a plain soldier—Roland de Vezécque—with nothing but my spurs and my sword wherewith to vanquish fortune! Nothing left to offer but my—my devotion!

He covered his eyes with his hands, this poor De Vezécque, and was silent.

Antoinette gently approached him, and without shyness, without enthusiasm, but with an indescribable charm and sweetness of manner, laid her hand upon his, and said :

‘ It seems that we should understand each other once for all—monsieur and I. Monsieur will fight for France, and I will suffer with her ; and, when all things are righted, we will count our gains and not our losses ! The life which monsieur has restored to me, when the time comes, will be for him. Whether he be a great general, or rich, or poor, or in youth, or in age, it will be all one to me.’

‘ Ah !’ he cried, rising, and clasping her hand in his, ‘ you would make it easier for me ! But your goodness makes it harder !’

He then, with many reiterated cautions as to keeping within doors, and seeming as if he could not bear to leave them, said farewell, promising to return on the morrow.

Antoinette watched him as he turned

mournfully away. He was a man truly to be respected, and of great probity of mind. She had never deceived herself into thinking that she could love him in the romantic sense of the word. But she could respect and admire him. His coming brought with it a sense of security and protection, and she could feel the deepest gratitude towards him, as well as the most perfect trust.





CHAPTER XLV.



THE unhappy Marquise was the great care and anxiety of Antoinette and her nurse, and their devotion was fully shared in by De Vezécque. After the first outburst of misery and despair, she had become touchingly patient and passive in their hands. She never complained, never asked for anything, accepted all their tender attentions, and heard all their plans and counter-plans discussed, amended, and discussed again, without any remark or suggestion. Their consultations all tended, naturally, to escape from France, and Antoinette was sometimes torn in two by the

agonizing thought that to save the one parent she must forsake the other, a prisoner in danger of his life. He had not yet been before the Assembly. De Vezécque knew that much. But except that he was in the St. Lazare he could gain no tidings of him. His one wish was to place Antoinette and her mother in safety, and to remain himself in Paris, to try what influence he could bring to bear in favour of the Marquis de Boisfontaine. But where to entrust them? To the frontier? Every outlet bristled with bayonets, and swarmed with spies. To England? Yes, to happy peaceful England, where Antoinette knew her welcome to be secure. That was the one hope.

One evening De Vezécque came with the news that he had heard through Gustav, of an old and confidential servant of his father's who had taken to keeping a diligence, which he drove himself. De Vezécque, feeling, as he said, that every day was of the greatest

consequence to their safety, and more unsafe for them to remain as they were, had made arrangements for them, and laid down every detail, even to the minutest. They were to take their places in the diligence in the early morning before sunrise, two days hence. Gustav would attend them, disguised, as far as the river, which they were to cross below Paris, and they might then feel comparatively safe from detection or pursuit. As they talked over this, the best and only scheme he could devise with any hope of success, Antoinette could not but notice that a change had come over De Vezécque within these last few days. He was quiet, grave, and self-contained. He said but little, but his heart was filled, she knew, with a great anxiety and a great regret. He went over every detail of the plan, and all the arrangements he had made, with the minutest care; and she could not but feel with what forethought, what judgment, and what self-abnegation he was act-

ing, and that it was for her father's sake only that he decided to remain behind them, alone in Paris. She thanked him with warm gratitude, and when he went out of the house, a sinking of heart quite indescribable sent the tears to her eyes. She saw him walk away, not daring to look up to the window near which she stood. Then his figure grew gray, and faint, and disappeared into the shadows of coming night.

During the two following days they did not see Monsieur de Vezécque ; neither did Gustav appear with the tidings they waited for, as to the exact hour at which the diligence was to start. These were times when neither to see nor hear from friends was of the worst augury. The *bonne* determined, with Antoinette's rather unwilling consent, to go out that evening, after darkness had set in, to try if she could gather any tidings. She had proceeded on her way some little time, carefully avoiding the blazing cafés and other such resorts, where the people,

gay and careless, were enjoying themselves at all hazards, and regardless of the morrow. She was even thinking wearily about retracing her steps, no wiser than when she set out, when a hand was laid upon her shoulder. By the dim light of the street-lamp she saw that it was a woman's hand and figure.

‘I am Margot,’ said the voice belonging to the figure. ‘Yes, little Margot. This in your ear—the sister of Dorine!’

Poor nurse! She felt for an instant as if an abyss had opened suddenly at her feet. She had heard from Antoinette of all that had happened at Boisfontaine. But she also knew the life of the village—its histories, its families, its wrongs. And she knew the terrible cohort it had sent forth to swell the tide of the Revolution—its Duclôts, its Dorines, its Josephs, and all the wretches whom they led. She knew all these; but Margot seemed to be of another generation whom the *bonne* knew nothing of. She had

been a child three years ago. Now that she was a woman, now that she was here in Paris, now that she had seen and recognised the *bonne*, what was going to happen? What new danger was here? What was Margot, for example? — an enemy or a friend? She could not utter a word, her heart beat so with dread, and uncertainty, and foreboding. Margot's quick wits divined all.

‘Have no fear, *citoyenne*,’ she said; ‘I came to Paris alone. I live alone. I love in the whole world—*mademoiselle*!’ Margot whispered this contraband title of respect in the *bonne*’s ear. ‘I permitted, it is true, that villain Gustav to make love to me. Bah! I sicken myself with having acquaintance among Communists, and patriots, and all manner of citizens of the Republic. But this is also for her sake; some day I may serve her. I love her! I will die for her!’

By a winding and circuitous route they wandered on, Margot telling the *bonne* all that had happened so lately, and events of

the utmost importance even to-day, which must seriously affect the safety of all. Gustav — wretch, ingrate, monster — had turned traitor ! Gustav, foster-brother to De Vezécque, had betrayed the confidence of his master ! What a blow was this ! Duclôt, diable that he was, had found Gustav. He had first cajoled, then threatened him — threatened to denounce him to the tribunal. He had sworn also a terrible oath, never to leave Gustav until his head fell, if he did not reveal all he knew ; and more (as was the custom) regarding the plans of his master and the hiding-place of the Boisfontaines, mère et fille. Gustav was weak, his own head was in danger ; there was all to gain and nothing to lose, besides reputation as a good patriot to acquire ; and life, even in Paris, was valuable to some people. He bought his at the price offered, and betrayed all that he knew, and, as we have said, much more ; for inconsistency and lying were no obstacles to being accepted as

an informer. The Marquis de Vezéeque was arrested, and brought before the National Tribunal. Margot had been there. She had seen and heard everything. He was accused: 1. Of devotion to the tyrant Capet; 2. Of intriguing with the émigrés; 3. Of desiring to follow La Fayette, and taking a command in the army of the princes; 4. Of being an aristocrat.

‘Of the first and the last,’ he said, ‘I am doubtless guilty. For the rest, judge how there can be truth in any of it! Truly, I have fought beside La Fayette, and beneath the banner of Montcalme; and I returned to France to range myself under that of my country, to fight for France, for the Republic, for Liberty.’

‘He looked noble!’ said Margot. ‘I saw; I heard. But, nevertheless, they said he was guilty. They sent him to La Force.’

While the *bonne*, whose very knees trembled under her, thought of what dire

effect this news would have on those to whom she must tell it all, walked on in a maze of horror, Margot still had tidings in her breast which she must share with her distracted listener.

‘As to Boisfontaine,’ she said, in a kind of sobbing whisper, ‘this in your ear. They wanted to burn the Château; they have done it now. And the poor Abbé—ah, cruel, wicked!—they took him into his own room, and bound him in his own chair amongst his books and papers, and left him there alone. As for me, I ran away into the woods to hide. But at night I stole back—all for love of *her*—just to see what had happened. I met Joseph on the terrace; the great door was open, and I told him that I went to fetch my sabots. He spoke nothing, wicked that he is; but pushed me away, so that I fell. But I am not, in truth, afraid of Joseph, for he is afraid of me. I ran upstairs. I thought to release the poor Abbé, to cut his bonds,

and to take him somewhere—anywhere but there—to hide him, for I have thought long ago that the bon Dieu had taken his senses for pity. I opened the door; the moon shone in all over the room; it was like daylight. And oh, the sight! The Abbé—it is quite true, and I had waited on him and tended him (always for mademoiselle's sake!) and he called me *bonne Margot*! There (little Margot shook with pity and a kind of grief and rage too)—there he sat alone, quite white and still. He was dead! In his hand there was a little round box, very small, and in the other hand a leather book. He told me many times that he was well off; that he had a friend. The friend was death!*

At last the *bonne*, surfeited with horrors, overpowered with anxiety, and almost beside herself, told Margot that they must in truth part; that she would perhaps meet her there to-morrow, and would again talk of

* See Note A at end of volume.

mademoiselle, whom, perhaps (she could not promise), *perhaps*, Margot might be permitted to see. She then made all haste to reach what was their present home, longing to unburthen herself, and to talk to mademoiselle, who, so clever and so brave, would see at once what they ought to do. At last she reached the house, and stood on the doorstep. Something had happened. The door was locked ; she could not enter. She scarcely dared make any sound for fear of attracting attention from the neighbours. She knocked, very softly, once or twice. At length the door was opened a little way, and the wife of the pastrycook appeared in a bonnet de nuit, the borders of which flapped with rage.

‘Go away!’ she said, in a low whisper. ‘You have ruined us! We are already “suspect” because of you—you and your aristocrats! The municipals have been here. The citoyennes are taken away. Ciel be thanked for it! How could we

tell what wickednesses we have been harbouring ! But we will be even with you all, intrigantes ! If you wish to leave us our heads, march !





CHAPTER XLVI.



It was the 1st of September, 1792, the beginning of a time never to be forgotten while the world lasts.

The Marquis de Vezécque, with many others of his rank equally guiltless with himself, had been sent direct to the prison of La Force. He was now to prove the truth of the saying, 'A month or a day is an age in a Revolution.' It seemed so short a time since he had landed in Paris, full of hope, of enthusiasm, of love for his country. He had found his adored commander, his 'hero of two worlds,' in whom

he had so trustingly believed, still riding about on that white charger of his, still endeavouring to make both ends meet, to govern the mob and not disown the King; still vapouring about with his hand on the curb rein of that terrible wild beast, the power of the people. And he had seen this hero thrown from his heroic position, flying for his life, not to join the émigrés (who would not have had him at any price), but to be arrested and sent to prison abroad. He had seen the King and his family immured in the Temple; he had seen the Marquis de Boisfontaine, and many others like him, hurried without trial to the St. Lazare; he had seen his betrothed wife in deadly peril in the very home of her fathers, and with the utmost difficulty had been able to snatch her from the death which, almost under her eyes, had befallen her brother. And now he himself had, in his turn, been betrayed by men bound to him not only by every tie of fealty and of gratitude, but by

a bond held dear by the peasantry of France, that of foster-brother.

As he was taken from the Hall of Assembly to La Force, by the miscreants who called themselves soldiers of the nation, and who, after their custom, overwhelmed him by the way with every insult which it was now meritorious to heap on rank, wisdom or virtue, he had comforted himself by conning over in his memory, one by one, all the details which he had laid down and given to Antoinette for their flight to England. 'She will go for her mother's sake,' he thought; 'and then she will herself be safe.' Again and again he wondered if she would remember all. The place where she would find the diligence, knowing so little of Paris as she did? The driver, whom he had tried to describe to her, would she recognise him? The old trusted servant of his father, grown rich in their service, would he indeed be there? This he could not answer. Who, for example, would have dreamed of suspect-

ing Gustav? But again he was resolved not to doubt. If he could do so, he thought he must go mad. He would rather think of her as a bird escaped from the snare, and die so believing. And this soothed his troubled spirit. He knew too, full well, that she would not forget him ; that she would welcome him if they should indeed live to meet in England or elsewhere ; and if not, that she would grieve for his loss.

When he first entered the prison he felt inclined to hope rather than to fear. And no wonder. He recognised so many in the same case, great either by position or attainments ; some renowned for statesmanship, for rank, for talent, for success. Priests who would not perjure themselves by the falsest of oaths ; men of blameless lives ; women beautiful and high-born—people, altogether, whom he knew to be innocent of any crime, as he himself was. These surely were here by misapprehension on the part of some one.

They would be released, and so would he. Poor De Vezécque ! The 2nd September dawned, and he was doomed to be terribly undeceived.*

All that day, until darkness set in, as one after another was led out into the judgment-hall of the prison, the order was given : ‘ To the Abbey,’ ‘ To the Conciergerie,’ ‘ To the Carmelites,’ or some other well-known place of durance which they were never to reach. And as each victim crossed the threshold he was cut down. All that day the air was pierced with shrieks and cries, and heavy with the sound of death-blows.

But a new shock awaited the unfortunate Marquis de Vezécque.

As he stood at a window facing the courtyard, at the end of that awful day, he involuntarily cast a shuddering glance at a man who had just entered. His dripping sword, his sleeves tucked up, his hands red

* See Note B at end of volume.

with carnage, told what his occupation had been ; and he called in loud assertive tones for wine, declaring with much swagger and persistence that he had earned extra pay. To him, Manuel (known to fame) went out in his official dress and scarf, patted him on the shoulder, praised him for a good patriot and excellent deliverer of the people, and promised all he asked. The blood-stained wretch turned his face ; De Vezécque's very heart stood still. He then and there tasted all the bitterness of death before his time, as he recognised the man in whose protection he had advised Antoinette and her mother to trust—to whom, indeed, he had entrusted them. It was the once driver of the diligence—the man who had been his father's trusted servant. A sort of frenzy came over him. He could have forgotten his manhood and cried aloud. Betrayed on every side, a powerless captive, he saw in his distracted mind—Antoinette, the Marquise, and the old bonne—three helpless women adrift in

Paris, and at such a time, without a friend in the world to guide them. He groaned aloud in misery, and turned his face to the wall, so utterly overwhelmed that he felt stunned, and as if nothing now could make him suffer any more. And yet, so great was his agony that his heart almost ceased to beat, and a deadly faintness overpowered him. If he had been called out for judgment at that moment, his limbs would have refused to carry him. This thought stung him, as it were, to life again. What ! he, a soldier, guiltless of any crime, should he appear in the eyes of these ruffians as a coward, unable to control himself ? Never ! The blood rushed back again to his tingling veins, and he stood upright, master of himself.

It was at this moment that he heard close to him a low, calm voice, reading from a book, and, as the light waned, reciting words from memory at intervals. He could hear every syllable, as it dropped musical and distinct from the lips of the speaker—distinctly,

musically, through all the din, and distraction, and misery of the time :

“ De profundis clamavi ad te, Domine :
Domine exaudi vocem meam.” ’

And after a pause, almost as impressive as the words, again he heard the same voice :

“ Quia apud Dominum misericordia : et
copiosa apud eum redemptio.” ’

Turning, he saw, at a little distance from where he stood, a priest, one of those who had nobly refused to take the oath demanded by the Convention. A little knot had gathered round him, soothed and quieted by his words, as, rising to the needs of this supreme hour, he spent the time in exhorting to faith and patience the trembling souls who heard him. All the night long his voice might be heard—never loud, always distinct :

“ Kyrie eleison. Christe eleison. Kyrie eleison.

“ Libera nos in hac hora mortis.” ’

Amongst the most devout in the small group around the priest was a mother and daughter ; a young girl who might have but just left her convent to enter on a world of which she was to be spared all knowledge. De Vezécque could not help noticing them especially. They clung together so, and were so quiet and so patient, and listened as if the words were life to them. Something in the turn of the young girl's head reminded him, in a distant, fanciful way, of Antoinette.

So passed the hours, to some in dread, to these in peace ; to others in frantic grief, controlled before the gaolers, irrepressible under cover of the night. But, whatever gleam of hope any might have had when they entered, there could be none left alive so wild as to entertain it, now. This prison was the antechamber of death.

Thus then, at La Force, passed the night of the 2nd September.*

The day following, about noon, De

* See Note C at end of volume.

Vezécque was sent for into the hall, where the infamous Hébert sat in judgment, and where Manuel, Lhuillier, and Billaud-Varennès, with others of their kind, walked in and out or sat looking on, and encouraging the 'work.' On arriving, he was still further to be tortured. He was ordered to stand aside: and that meant, that with the instincts of a brave man, a soldier, a noble of France, he was to stand by and see what wrung his generous soul more than any personal suffering—one after another brought out before that dread tribunal, where murderers were the judges; one after another, brave and steadfast souls, who refused to stain their lips by uttering a disloyal word. Amongst them the young girl and her mother, who had listened so earnestly to the priest. Their arms were linked together.

'Let us remember, dear mother,' she was saying, 'we promised each other to join hands—to keep our arms down. It will the sooner be over.'

They passed quite close to him, with white, quiet faces, walking to their doom. He saw the priest himself led out, by-and-by, with others, whom he knew to be fathers, husbands, wives, heads of houses, mothers. All doomed. Like a phantasmagoria the dread processions filed in at one door, and out at the other to instant death. Then the pitifullest sight, perhaps, of all—the Princess de Lamballe and her maid were brought in. De Vezécque had seen her, in her beauty, at the Court of France. He knew her to be good and innocent of every crime but loyalty. He knew that she might have stayed in England safe, and honoured, and loved. But when all forsook the Queen, save a few devoted friends, she returned to take her place beside her royal mistress. And she, too, had to stand, so pale and lovely, before the wretch who sat in the chair behind that green-covered table, with his blood-stained pikemen and his staff of ruffians

pressing round, and to answer when questioned.

‘Do you love the country? Do you hate the King and Queen? Swear that you hate them. Answer!’

‘The first I can truly say that I do. The last—it is not in my heart—I cannot say it.’

‘To the Abbaye!’ said the judge. A wave of his hand, and all that grace and goodness went—beyond his power, we know.

The day waded on with bleeding footsteps, and yet De Vezécque sat silent and motionless, half alive, in a remote corner of the hall, forgotten for a time amongst criminals more eminent or more conspicuous in the eyes of the nation.

All at once, about five o’clock in the afternoon, one of the judges turned suddenly round in his chair, saying:

‘Where is the man whom the citizen Danton spoke about as plotting to leave the

country? A vain aristocrat, seeking service in the army of the émigrés.'

De Vezécque had lost the power to be surprised at this accusation. He neither cared nor heeded. Where all was so monstrous, details mattered little.

'What hast thou to say? Guilty—yes, or no?'

'Emphatically no!' he roused himself to reply. 'And in the name of the Republic itself, I protest——'

'The citizen must protest outside. Take him to the Luxembourg!'

And now—last, bitterest indignity, to be handled by such hands—two pikemen seized him by force, hustled him to the doorway, and pushed him roughly forward. There was a great tumult outside. The victim who had immediately preceded De Vezécque, a tall, powerfully-built officer of the royal guard, was instinctively defending himself to the last, and so but prolonging his agony, to the satisfaction of the butchers

who tortured him. De Vezécque stood on the dreadful threshold. It was mental anguish which had prostrated him. At the sight of blows the courage of his manhood sprang to life again, and he proudly waited as for the fatal blow.

At this instant an extraordinary thing befell him. A voice distinctly said in his ear :

‘ Throw yourself down !’

He was a soldier, and the instinct of habit made him obey. He fell on a pile of the unknown dead, face downwards, and was instantly covered by a terrible weight of mangled and bleeding forms, ever growing heavier, till the horror of it deprived him of his senses. But he was not to die there. The time dragged on, and yet he lived. As the sun set, and twilight drew on to veil the horrors of that awful day, the very murderers grew tired, and, instead of slaughter, pay and wine were the ideas now uppermost in their blind brains.

It was almost dark, and De Vezécque, once more conscious that he was a living being and not a corpse, began to wonder how long he must endure this dreadful existence? Whether he was saved to be murdered after all? Whether it had been the phantasy of a disordered mind which had made him think that he heard that voice? These, and a hundred other ideas, passed through the brain where reason was not yet overthrown. He recalled incidents of horror in the day now over. He thought of the fair girl and her mother, of the priest, and the group which had knelt round him in the prison, and who were now in that Paradise where their miseries were for ever ended. Then, like the stirring notes of a silver trumpet-call, the words of Antoinette suddenly rang in his ear, and aroused him to the love of life: ‘We must pray for better times!’

It was a strange place to pray in. But he gathered his thoughts, and uttered within

himself a prayer as intense as ever he had breathed since he was a child : ‘ *De profundis clamavi ad te, Domine.*’ The words came back to his memory like a long-forgotten strain, and so clearly that they seemed almost to be spoken by a voice.

Just at that instant a stealthy step painfully groping among the prostrate bodies came near. A silence. Some one speaking quite close to where he lay :

‘ Art thou, then, living ?’

‘ Yes ; I live.’

Without further parley, the ghastly burthen under which he lay was gradually removed, and he was pulled roughly to his feet.

As soon as he could stand upright, he perceived a short brawny figure standing by him in the dusk, and a hoarse voice whispered :

‘ Follow me.’

De Vezécque had to gather his strength with an almost incredible effort to enable

him to walk alone. The ground was covered thick with corpses. He shuddered at the bare thought of setting foot there. More than once he stumbled to his knees, and got up again, he scarce knew how. The one feeling he was capable of at the moment was, that he must force himself to walk and to control his unsteady limbs, lest he should be touched by those blood-stained hands, or be supported by that terrible figure which he had not failed to recognise as that of the one-time servant of his house.

As, slowly at first and then more rapidly, they wended their way in silence through narrow and tortuous streets, which told of their approach to the river, the fresh evening air revived him somewhat. He began to wonder why they were going thither; whether he was saved; whether he was being led to some new den of misery and horror, or to death in some other shape. He was unconscious of bodily fear. His senses seemed to be deadened and blunted,

and his brain in that passive state in which it was incapable of any further effort—in-
capable of hope as of fear.

Presently they emerged close upon a wharf where several small craft were moored. His guide hailed one of the watermen, and, pointing to De Vezécque, said some words in which the names Danton, Marat, and others occurred. Turning, then, to De Vezécque, he said, in a harsh, grating voice, with a gesture of dismissal :

‘Go ; thou art spared ! I can do no more for thee. Escape for thy life, before to-morrow’s sun betray thee.’

As he was about to leave him, De Vezécque, who had not hitherto spoken one word, said :

‘For what hast thou spared me ? Knowest thou, then, to whom thou hast given a life ?’

The man paused. Then, pushing back the red cap which had slipped low on his dark, rugged face, with a hand of the stains

on which he appeared entirely unconscious, he said :

‘This morning as I and my compatriots, working in defence of the Nation, were riding the people of their tyrants, a voice—God or devil, I know not—said aloud in mine ear, “Save one !” Behold, *thou art that one !* Be content.’

He strode away into the grim darkness, waiting neither for thanks nor guerdon, and De Vezécque, bewildered and motionless, stood gazing after him.

Could Antoinette, could La Fayette, could his own father, or (had she been living) could his very mother have seen him, as he stood there in the moonlight, which of them would have recognised him ? Such ordeals as he had passed through leave marks which nothing can efface. He had gone into that terrible prison an upright soldierly figure, in the prime of life, with years of health and strength before him, well dressed and appointed, and of the ruddy

hue of complexion which told of active life in the open field. He stood on the banks of the Seine that night, an aged and broken man. His hair was streaked with bands or patches of white, and hung loose and untied. His face was ashen gray ; in cheeks nor in lips was there a vestige of colour left. He stooped like one twice his years. His clothes were torn, and such as, but for the blessed shelter of the night, would have impelled him to the very river itself to rid him of the marks of his fearful hiding-place.* As he stood thus, apparently incapable of action, he was aroused by a rough, but not unfriendly, grasp on his shoulder, and the waterman drew him to the boat close by.

‘ Does the citizen, then, sleep ? There is the tocsin ! Hark, the drum is beating to arms ! The saints preserve us, and bring us, presently, where I may do thee a saving turn ! The street will be alive with good patriots in the twinkling of an eye. Let us go !’

* See Note D at end of volume.



CHAPTER XLVII.



T may be conjectured, without much stretch of imagination, who it was that had come forward as accuser in the case of the Marquise de Boisfontaine and her daughter. In their case, it was no old servant, once faithful ; no injured retainer ; no oppressed dweller on their soil, or wronged member of their household ; not Joseph, not Dorine even. Duclôt, citizen of the Republic, much-admired, much-lauded tribune of the people it was who, with the rapture of evil joy occasioned by the confession of Gustav, had rushed to the Hall of Assembly, and there denounced ‘these

dangerous criminals, these aristocrats, these intrigantes steeped in plots, and in constant communication with the enemies' camp.'

He was rewarded, this disinterested patriot, on the spot, by a written order for the arrest of these conspirators. So anxious was he for the defence of the Nation that there should be no miscarriage of justice, that he undertook to superintend their arrest himself. Accordingly, having waited until the middle of the night, so that the harsh noise and tumult in the house at that hour might inflict the utmost addition of panic and alarm on the victims, he and his 'guard' arrived at the pastrycook's door soon after midnight. The first thing to be done was to arouse peremptorily the pastrycook and his wife; and the latter, terrified to madness, hastened with clamorous eagerness to wash her hands of any complicity with these criminals, and officiously conducted the great man and his satellites with

their lanterns, their pikes, their swords, in the promptest manner upstairs, abusing her inmates on the way thither.

If these wretches hoped for any triumph over the two delicate women into whose presence they marched, in the matter of beholding their alarm, refusing their entreaties for mercy, or turning a deaf ear to their cries and tears, they were destined to be greatly disappointed. Duclôt, blustering into the room and flinging himself into a chair with as much clash and clatter of accoutrements as possible, found both the ladies calmly awaiting him, forewarned of his arrival by the tumult on the stairs. Their perfect quietude, their grave but undaunted composure, their instant, un murmuring compliance with his rough mandate, almost disconcerted him. These aristocrats were as much out of his reach, and beyond his ken, here, in this small, poor chamber, lighted by the lantern which one of the citizen-soldiers had put with unnecessary noise upon the

table, as on that day when he had seen them last together on the terrace at Boisfontaine ; or when the younger citoyenne had faced him without quailing that day in the Palace of Versailles ; or when, lurking about near the Château Boisfontaine in older times than these, he had more than once looked in slyly from outside through the windows of the Château, and had caught glimpses of high-bred groups within, walking on shining floors, reflected in mirrors lit by waxen lights, and arousing undying hatred in his vengeful mind by their beauty, their grace, and by the difference between them. He had then believed it to be the casket that made the jewels shine—the grand castle and its surroundings, the plenty, the wealth, the warmth ; while he was outside, and poor, and cold, and worked for his bread. It was easily explained in those days ; but it was not so easily explained to-day. He was up in the world, and they were down. He was triumphant ;

they were under his feet—his, Jacques Duclôt's. He was the well-paid emissary of an all-powerful tribunal; they were landless, homeless, ruined. They were on their way to prison; and he—yes, he and no other—was there to take them to it. Yet, as he sat down before them in his wickedness and his power, intoxicated with success, and filled with a savage glee at the prosperity of his schemes, he was conscious that they were as unlike him, and the beings of his world, as ever. The grace with which the poor Marquise controlled her trembling limbs, and, recalling the brave fortitude of the Queen under circumstances as terrible, continued to veil her agony in outward composure, was wonderful. He watched Antoinette wrap a covering cloak round her mother, contriving to whisper words of comfort, inaudible to all save herself. Again that indescribable flash of feeling crossed his mind, as if he could have worshipped her as a saint! But it was a flash that

burnt and seared like lightning, and stung him into passion. Rising, or rather flinging himself out of his chair with an oath, he said :

‘ What ! intriguing before our very faces ! Citizens, we are too indulgent. We tarry. The people wait for no one. Take them—the fiacre waits below !’

At the word ‘ fiacre,’ a gleam of sad comfort stole into the heart of the Marquise. She and Antoinette were, then, to be together ? She did not care now. She could bear it. She could bear being pushed, and hurried, and hustled by these rude men, as they were dragged rather than conducted to the door of the house, pursued by the shrill vociferations of the pastrycook’s wife, swearing that her husband (who was at that moment hiding under the mattress in his bedroom in abject terror) was out on patrol with other patriots like himself, or would have joined his voice to hers in purging themselves of anything like contempt of the tribunal by harbouring such deep-dyed

traitors to the Republic even for an hour ; and whose detestation took the appropriate shape of all the abusive epithets which a French tongue of the lower orders could collect for quotation on short notice.

Their destination was the St. Lazare ; and here again a new hope sprang to life in the hearts of both Antoinette and her mother. The husband and father was—there. They might meet—who could tell ? Did he yet live, they wondered ? To hear tidings of him and of De Vezécque, the poor *bonne* had that very evening gone out. Antoinette grieved as she thought how the faithful soul would suffer, when returning she should find them gone. She was sorry, too, for the pastrycook and his wife, and she forgave the poor frightened wretch her torrent of abuse. She had sheltered them at need ; and in those days to harbour aristocrats was to be ‘suspect,’ and to be ‘suspect’ was to be in danger of the guillotine.

So thought, so hoped, so feared they, as the lumbering vehicle with its escort of guards in and out of uniform—for the sovereign people had lately decreed that no one need wear uniform who preferred any other garb—arrived at the gate of St. Lazare. Here, by the light of wretched oil-lamps and battered lanterns, they stood outside the wicket, waiting to be let in. On the left hand was the office, or registry, where their names and their crimes were written down and kept. On the right hand was a door which was wide open, and then and there the unhappy Marquise received a blow, so agonizing that death had never any terror for her more.

She saw, standing a little way within that doorway, a face and form she knew—some one in a dark suit of clothes, without his coat or cravat, his hair cut short, and his hands clasped as he walked up and down, talking softly to himself. This was the condemned cell, and he who walked up and

down there was a criminal of the deepest dye, the tribunal said—innocent of any wrong, she knew! It was the Marquis de Boisfontaine, waiting for the hour when the cart should arrive to take him to his death. The wicket was opened, and with a cry of exceeding bitterness she took advantage of it and flew into his arms.

‘Oh that I might have been spared this moment!’ said the unhappy Marquis, as he supported her with one arm and gave his other hand to his daughter.

To save him from suffering was Antoinette’s instinct. Turning to the gaoler, whose nature, rough as it was, had not in these earlier days become wholly callous, and who was looking on half in pity, half in irritated perplexity, she said :


‘Let us go; my mother has fainted.’ And looking back to her father she turned and said: ‘I live for her. We shall soon follow you, my father. Pray for us. The good God be with my most dear father!’

So they were separated, and were taken
—he to Life in death, and they to death in
life—that living death which was the por-
tion of the condemned.





CHAPTER XLVIII.

HE Republic, 'always generous, always just,' had given into the hands of Duclôt, accuser and avenger, three aristocrats; the especial objects of his personal hatred, true, but also deadly enemies of the Nation—plotters, betrayers, and implicated in many desperate intrigues. This crowning with success of conduct so virtuous and so sublime as his, was not unaccompanied by other reward. Danton himself addressed the one-eyed patriot with public approval; Camille Desmoulins extolled him in print; and Fouquier Tinville wrote down in his private note-

book the summary of the crimes which Duclôt laid to the charge of the citizens De Boisfontaine, père, mère, et fille, lest the surcharged tablet of his memory might fail to retain them all.

Ascending the prison stairs, they had passed through a large vaulted room thronged with prisoners, many of them high-born and high-bred, once in office about the Court, so that Antoinette knew some of them by sight. Habits and instincts which came of her English training had caused her to follow with devoutest thankfulness the footsteps of the turnkey as he carried the insensible form of the Marquise straight onward to a cell near the top of the staircase, and having deposited his burthen with scant courtesy on the untempting bed, had withdrawn, leaving them together, and alone. She had dreaded that mixed society.

Madame de Boisfontaine's swoon was mercifully long, and occupied Antoinette so

entirely that the pale streaks of haggard day, looking through the bleared window of the prison, found her still on her knees, mechanically chafing the cold hands that had neither nerve nor life in them to respond. The dawn revealed to her the cold, drear chamber, the still insensible form of the Marquise encircled in her own patient clasp. Somehow, as she knelt there, reviewing all that had been crowded into the past few hours, and how she had said to her father as they parted, ‘I live for her!’ she again recalled to mind the little picture at Boisfontaine, which had so riveted her attention when she was recovering from her illness—the elder and the younger women : Ruth and Naomi ; and how she had delighted in the sentiment of the picture, and had vowed even then, ‘Where thou goest, I will go!’ It had come to her now in the full meaning of the sacrifice. By-and-by life slowly returned, and the Marquise de Boisfontaine opened her eyes. A bewil-

dered look, anxious and unrecognising, came into her face. She sat up.

‘ Ah, Toinette,’ she said, ‘ has the Queen risen? I must go. Do not detain me, dear; I am late. Where is my dresser? Where are my people? You should not have let me sleep so long, sweet!’

Antoinette’s very heart stood still. Then came a passionate reaction. The horror, the misery, the loneliness, broke in all their dread certainty upon her. And the hopelessness of it! The injustice! The cruelty! She recognised the truth—her mother’s mind was unhinged!

But Antoinette’s brave spirit did not long spend itself in aimless struggles against the prison-bars of its captivity. With all the tenderness of her nature she soothed and humoured the stray and wandering mind, and tended the fragile body, which, like a reed bent down by the storm, regained somewhat of its elasticity now that the tension of the strain on the mental powers

was relaxed. The prisoners, who had many comparative privileges in these early days, were allowed to meet in the middle room of the prison ; and to give her change, if not diversion, Antoinette would wander there sometimes with her mother, to greet or be greeted by those whom they had known in very different times. The harmless mania of the Marquise, always and unvaryingly the same, was that she was at Versailles, and that her turn of duty was at hand. She had forgotten everything between. She would smile, a sort of wan moonlight smile inexpressibly sad to see, clasp her hand round Toinette's slender arm, and, looking up into her face, say :

‘ You will not let me be late, Toinette ! Madame de St. Marie is not gone, I know, for she is here. So I trust you, ma mie ! You will not forget me ? ’

‘ No, dear mother ; I will call you in good time,’ she would say.

‘ I always think I hear the Queen's voice,

especially at night when you are asleep, chérie,' the Marquise would continue. 'Sometimes she is singing to her harp, and sometimes laughing that so musical laugh. I may have dreamed; but I think not. Are you sure I am not wanted yet? Is the Court yet absent?'

'My mother, it is—it is—no longer at Versailles.'

The long months at the Tuileries; the flight to Varennes; the invading mob; the time, place, and manner of her own escape; the dread incidents that had latterly been crowded into her own life; the loss of husband and of son—all these had faded from her mind. Sometimes Antoinette wept in secret over the blank, and again reproaching herself, would fall upon her knees and thank God for the merciful oblivion which He had granted to sorrows so great. She would wonder at, and prize anew, the natural charm of her mother's disposition, the gracious manner, and the gentle temper,

which made her filial duties so easy and so sweet. For herself, she was strong to bear all, praying only that they might be taken together. Antoinette had plenty of warnings of the imminence of this change. Every day that passed, as the old, the young, the gay, the sorrowful, the indifferent, were called away to their grim fate, it became more certain that there could be no such thing as release, no such thing as escape, no such thing as deliverance, except through the grave and gate of death. There is no need to describe the prison-life, which has been so often done by sufferers and eye-witnesses. Before the King's trial and death had seared men's hearts, and made the slightest delay between condemnation and the scaffold intolerable to the zeal of patriots, the members of the national tribunal felt it necessary to wear that cloak of formal hypocrisy, that fiction about the Republic being always generous, and always just, which necessitated a trial of some sort,

thus retarding within limits the grim haste of death. But every day the party in St. Lazare, however often reinforced, lost some of its numbers ; some who were there yesterday, were missing to-day. The lists were read out at nightfall—often in the middle of the night : and on the following day the laden tumblers creaked and groaned on their way to the scaffold. But the pluck, the nerve, the high-breeding of the noblesse of old France never failed. No gaoler ever heard a cry or prayer for respite. No spectator on the line of route could detect a quailing spirit in the hundreds—nay, the thousands—whom the pitiless mob jeered at on the way to execution.





CHAPTER XLIX.

ANTOINETTE and her mother had been some three weeks in prison, when late one evening there were sounds of a commotion on the outer landing at the top of the stone staircase. Any noise of feet and voices was to be dreaded, as the precursor of change. Suddenly the key was thrust into the lock of the door, and a parley took place outside. Her heart beat loud with anxiety and fear. All at once she became aware of a voice she knew. It was saying with considerable pettish irritation :

‘ Yes ! A disgrace ! A chiffon ! An owl !

A bat ! All these, Citizen Turnkey ! I tell you I am an aristocrat to the backbone : the worst kind of intrigante royalist—I ! For example, I say all manner of things against the Republic. I hate the Nation ! I spit upon the Convention ! I defy the Tribunes, and the Municipals, and the National Guard ! Bah ! Open, then, and hide me in that dungeon ! See now ! Listen. I will give thee truth. Your Marat sent me here on my way to the guillotine ! Open, I say !

When the door was at length opened to this contumacious and voluble citoyenne, Antoinette drew her aside, and so soon as the door was closed, embraced her with unfeigned joy, saying, ‘ Oh, my nurse ! my dear, dear nurse !’ and wept—for the first time since she came thither.

The hapless Marquise knew the face of her *bonne* ; and her reception of this faithful friend and servant would of itself have revealed the state of her mind, if

Antoinette had not whispered it. Assuming the air of a grande dame, and speaking in a displeased voice, she demanded her lappets and her earrings.

‘You know that I am late,’ she repeated again and again reproachfully. ‘You will not call my women! You always did try me, Nanette, and tyrannize over me, because I am easy! To-day I am angry. You know that there is a clock in every room in the palace, and that they all point to the hour. It is unaccountable! It is negligent! I fail to understand!’

But the *bonne* had what she called her ‘ways.’ She knew how to manage the afflicted Marquise, better than did Antoinette.

‘I have with me all that madame will require,’ she said. ‘Will madame, then, sleep now? and to-morrow I will attend madame’s levee.’

Opening a bundle which she had brought with her, she displayed to the two ladies all

the treasures she had collected haphazard, with the help of Margot, and at the risk of her own life, from their old haunts, in the hope of one day being admitted, as many servants, relations, and friends were then, into the prison. The good *bonne* had brought sundry invaluable relics of fine clean linen, worth its weight in gold, Antoinette thought. A flowered silk *sacque*, some trinkets which she had snatched up as they left the Tuileries that awful day in August, and had carried about her ever since. Having looked at these in a childish, satisfied sort of way, the Marquise, so easily appeased and mollified, readily yielded to their joint entreaties, and lay down calmly to sleep again.

Once more that night the prisoners of St. Lazare were awakened by the clank of keys and lanterns, and the wrenching open of bolts and iron-barred doors. It was midnight, and sleep, or at least silence, reigned within, when that dreadful sound

again awoke the captives to anxiety and dread.

It was the myrmidons of the Convention who had brought the death-lists. The cruelty of the whole arrangement was so palpable. Three o'clock on the following day was the hour fixed for the processions to set out for the guillotine. And it was by this means* that five or six hundred people would be roused to suspense and misery, in the middle of the night, to hear the names of a portion of their number read out on the death-list, fifteen hours before the time. There was profound calculation in it. This night, amongst twenty others, the name of the elder citoyenne Boisfontaine was in the list. What a night was that to Antoinette! Her mother to be taken and she left. How was she to bear it, alone, in this den of misery? 'Oh, mother, dear mother!' she said over and over again to herself, so as not

* See Note E at end of volume.

to awaken the victim, until at length the *bonne* could no longer bear it, and entreated her so that she at last lay down on her bed with the thought of to-morrow's needs upon her strength.

Early the next morning Madame de Boisfontaine was awake, talking rapidly to herself after the fashion of the insane. At length, when she could not be persuaded to rest any more, she said :

‘ I will rise ; I am on duty to-day ; I must be early—early, Nanette, early. Listen, and make haste ! I wear the flowered silk. And, as I want no remarks from Madame de Noailles, arrange my lappets carefully.’

Her thoughts were wandering to those early days, when the Duchesse de Noailles kept such strict etiquette at the Queen's toilette that she had been known to reprove in the severest manner the wry pinning of a lappet, or the lack of a pair of ear-rings !

Antoinette listened to all the directions, and obeyed them with infinite love and pity

in her heart. The pathetic unconsciousness of the victim, and her near approach to such a death, inspired in the devoted daughter a kind of awe, as well as tenderness. Those eyes, so soon to close, would never more see the sun rise through the faded grimy window of the prison ; they would open, before its setting, on another world than ours. Those restless hands, so small and fair, would be cold in some dishonoured grave, where she, even if she lived, could never find it to weep over ! But who could wish to keep her ? Not Antoinette, who loved her so—not even Antoinette ! So she smothered her sobs, and drove back her tears, and knelt to arrange the flowered silk which had last been worn in such different times, and stood to fasten the lace into her mother's hair, never allowing herself to think or speak, only now and then to print an agonized kiss on the hand or cheek nearest to her.

At last the terrible moment came—the tramp of rough feet on the stair ; the

maximum of noise and clash with every movement, and the opening of the creaking door ; then the hush of the prisoners, who gathered near to say and look their farewells to the condemned—to say them before the gaolers in such wise that not a tear, or a groan, or a prayer should gratify their malice.

Turning to Antoinette, the Marquise caught her by the hand :

‘ Who are these men ? ’ she said in an unearthly tone, and with a startled, affrighted air. ‘ I want my own people ! Surely the carriage waits ? I ought to be in my apartments by now ! I am late ! What is it ? ’

In an agony of dread lest at this last critical moment she should be undeceived, and awakening to conscious knowledge realize all the terrible truth, Antoinette turned round with something of the feeling of a stag at bay, hemmed in on all sides, desperate. In her agony she caught sight of another of the condemned—Madame de St. Marie, one of the Queen’s bedchamber-women. Seeing

Antoinette's distress, and having heard the words of the Marquise, with infinite tact she divined the whole situation at a glance. Coming a little forward with a curtsy towards the Marquise, she said with a grace and manner quite understood by the admiring coterie who surrounded them :

‘ Madame, as you have said, the Queen waits ; we attend the Queen ; I follow you !’

And with a backward glance to Antoinette, and an ‘ air ’ such as they might have worn at Versailles in its palmy days, they descended together.

‘ And I—I also am intriguante ; I spit on the Convention ! I follow my mistress ! Vive le Roi—la Reine ! A bas the Nation, Marat, Danton, and those others !’*

This was the war-cry of the devoted *bonne* as she, too, in spite of objections from the officials, insisted on mounting the tumbrel with madame's gloves in her hand.

There was a cry which grieved the very

* See Note F at end of volume.

hearts of those left behind—the first of suffering which had escaped Antoinette's pale lips since these miseries fell upon her.


There were not wanting kind hands to lay her tenderly on her bed in the empty cell, where she must wait alone her turn for death.*

* See Note G at end of volume.





CHAPTER L.

HORTLY after the catastrophe mentioned in our last chapter, a young man in deep mourning, an Englishman, might have been seen wandering about Paris from one grim prison to another, asking questions, here and there to receive false or futile replies, and pale and worn with a great anxiety. At length, late in the day, cold, faint, and wretched, Geoffrey Leigh, for he it was, turned down a side-street, intending to snatch some refreshment in the least crowded or conspicuous café which might be near. The street was dull and ill-lighted; and having found the

kind of place he sought for, and partaken of the hasty meal without which he felt that he might fail by the way before his task was done, he paid his reckoning, and again entering the darkening street began to ask himself what he had best do to find some clue to her whereabouts for whom he so earnestly sought? As he stood a moment, wondering which way to turn, and almost maddened with the thought that he might be, perhaps was, too late, he became conscious that some one swiftly passing had jostled against him, and turned round to look him in the face. This 'some one' was a short, slight female figure, muffled up in a nondescript kind of wrap which was drawn over her head as if for shelter from the damp raw air, and was surmounted by a conspicuous rosette with streaming ends. He had been so pre-occupied and exhausted that it had not struck him before, but he now remembered that two or three times since the evening had begun to draw in he had seen this

figure ; sometimes across the road ; once by his side, speeding on ahead of him ; again behind him ; and this time he noticed that a pair of bright black eyes flashed out from under the muffling shawl, and that she made a rapid signal to attract his notice. He was effectually roused ; the dejected sense of failure that was upon him dispersed like a mist ; he was now alive to all impressions. He did not quite know what to make of this mysterious apparition who was just at this instant gliding about a few yards in front of him. What could she want ? what did her signal mean ? It might be a feint to lure him to some ruffian's lair ; but this idea he dismissed at once—crime was no veiled or secret thing in Paris at this time. Wrong, oppression, and treachery walked her streets proudly, and, in the name of the Republic, committed all crimes. Suddenly the thought struck him that it might be some servant of the De Boisfontaines', who had recognised him ; he was instantly alert and eager. How

could he have been so obtuse? Here might be the very clue he needed. Mechanically following, he saw the muffled figure melt into shadow in the Place Louis XV., and, as he peered after her, afraid to call or run, or do anything to attract attention, she suddenly reappeared at his elbow, and said:

‘I am of Boisfontaine. I love—*her*. Follow, and I will speak.’

Hovering a few steps in front, she led the way until, turning suddenly into an arched passage, he found himself in the courtyard of an empty house—none other, had he known it, than the deserted and ownerless Hôtel Boisfontaine. Here Margot stopped.

‘Monsieur will remember me?’ she said, unwrapping a fold of the shawl, and showing her clever little brown face. ‘I have monsieur’s gold-piece. My heart is mademoiselle’s, and ever mademoiselle’s!’

‘I have sought every prison in Paris,’ said Geoffrey in the same tone, ‘and in vain!’

‘Listen. Mademoiselle is in the St.

Lazare. We have no time to lose. Tomorrow—the bon Dieu grant it may not be this night—she will be accused, and for the third time, by a wicked enemy. Save her, Monsieur Anglais ! save her !

‘ Speak on, Margot ! I wait to act. Do not weep ; I will take care of you, good girl ! You shall help me to save mademoiselle.’

‘ Yes ! She will be accused ! I know it for truth. And who then can save her ? Daily I see her, so patient, so angelic ! The turnkey’s wife contrives it for me. There is one way. Amongst the good citizen patriots who sit to condemn the accused—one—one—has been known to spare !’

‘ Who, then ? For Heaven’s sake speak ! I go now !’

Approaching a little nearer, and clasping her hands together, as if she hardly dared even to pronounce that dreaded name, she said :

‘ The citizen Danton !’

‘ Danton !’ he said, starting back in horror. ‘ But I go. You give me life and

hope,' he instantly added in a low, determined voice, which struck powerfully on Margot's receptive mind, accustomed to words, gesticulations, and noise on occasions of excitement. 'And you, Margot?'

'For me,' she said simply, 'I live all day, and every day, near the door of St. Lazare. I toil, and wash, and sweep for the turnkey's wife, and the broom seems of gold, for I sweep for mademoiselle. I live for her—if she dies, I die too!'

'And now to see this monster in human shape!' muttered Geoffrey, as he flew back into the great square, and, taking the first fiacre that he could find, drove at once to No. 1, Cours du Commerce.

Dismissing the conveyance on entering that street, and filled with a tumult of hope, eagerness, repulsion, doubt, yet striving with true English doggedness to hide all appearance of these under a calm exterior, Geoffrey knocked at the door. His summons was answered by a gendarme, who stolidly eyed

him over, and said that the citizen Danton was at home, but had no leisure, as he was about to go to the Assembly, and had a friend with him. However, on Geoffrey's importunity and announcement that he was an Englishman, therefore not of the usual run of visitors to the house, the porter went for instructions, and, returning, beckoned him to enter. He was shown upstairs into a low room lit by a single oil-lamp. On the table were all the inflammatory papers of the day. The *Père Duchesne* was duly represented, *Discours de la Lanterne*, *Le Vieux Cordelier*. Some sheets of manuscript lay about, and some uncorrected proofs; for Camille Desmoulins lived here also.

The room was empty, and Geoffrey stood waiting. What thoughts chased each other through his mind at this moment we can partly conjecture. He felt sick at the idea of facing this terrible man, the avowed author of the September massacres, and one of the most prominent of the knot of demons

who were deluging France with blood ; a kind of sans-culotte Mirabeau, with the power, the talent, the physique, but not the education, of that senator of the people. He had not waited many minutes before, casting his eyes round, he perceived that a curtain and not a wall divided this end of what was, in reality, a long low room, from its farther portion : and that, on the other side of this curtain, were two or more persons conversing together in suppressed tones. Every nerve and every power seemed taxed to its utmost to keep down the repugnance, the loathing which he felt at the coming interview. And yet he was conscious of a sort of morbid curiosity as to what this man could be like with whom he was going to negotiate, or whom he would bribe, or with whom—it was for her sake !—he might have even to plead ; with whom he was, at all events, determined, one way or other, to prevail. And the moment was come. The curtain was at this instant drawn aside, and two men entered,

talking together. As they did not notice him in any way, although evidently aware of his presence, Geoffrey had time to look at and remark them both, with all the keen observation of his quickened senses.

One of them, who was taking leave of the other, was a man who, despite his mean features, furtive, suspicious eyes, and pinched sallow face, had in his dress all the affectation of a *petit maître*. He wore a rose-coloured silk waistcoat, covered with embroidered muslin, and a coat and breeches of dark cloth with steel buttons, which, to Geoffrey's thinking, had a cold glitter on them which matched his eyes. His lean hands, with cruel, flat-tipped fingers, were partly disguised by ruffles of fine cambric, and over his arm he carried a cloak lined with red, large enough to envelop him from head to foot. This, Geoffrey Leigh rightly conjectured to be no other than Robespierre.

‘Adieu!’ he was saying. ‘On the whole I am fairly satisfied. But we *must* move

apace. When Camille returns tell him to let me see his next proof-sheets. I might suggest—— The old *Cordelier* must speak out. He must strike the unmistakable, not the vague, in his rallying note. For the rest, touching him on the sleeve, and speaking impressively, ‘be incorruptible, as—I am!’

So saying he went out, and his companion turned his tremendous head and face towards Geoffrey. He was indeed a remarkable looking man, of a visage terrible and appalling, such as men might behold and tremble. His huge, massive front, wild locks, and the air of defiance and rugged strength, carried a power with it. His linen was soiled and coarse, his shirt open at the throat as if to give vent to his great voice, and his restless hands were discoloured and dirty. His vanity was to strike terror, and to appear terrible.

As he turned upon Geoffrey, the young man’s eyes met his with a fixed, determined look, such as he but seldom encountered.

‘Your business, young man? Speak

shortly, and to the point. I am engaged—engaged,’ he uttered with a grim smile, ‘on the business of the Sovereign People.’

To the point struck Geoffrey, without preface.

‘You have in your prison, Maison St. Lazare, a young’—‘lady’ he would have said, but substituted ‘girl.’ ‘She is—an orphan’ (here he involuntarily passed his hand across his face, lest his horror should be patent and affect his cause). ‘This young—girl—has committed no wrong, either against the Nation or its Republic. She has English relatives, of whom I am the representative. We’—he was going to say ‘demand,’ but altered the phrase—‘we, her English relatives, request of you, Citizen Representative, to order her release. She has lost all in the late——’ He hesitated for a word that should not express all he meant.

‘The late Retribution,’ amended Danton, in a voice very suitable to his appearance.

‘The English nation will hear of this, and

will know how to welcome justice—at—the hands of Frenchmen,’ said Geoffrey, feeling choked and suffocated. ‘I ask, I entreat, I—I—implore of the Republic, said to be so generous and so just, to prove these grand attributes to the world. And I ask of you, who have the power in your hand, to release one who has neither kin nor lands left in all France, and whose death would at least be no gain to the country.’

Danton made no reply. He took out a dirty leather pocket-book, and either read or affected to read certain hieroglyphics therein, glancing sternly at Geoffrey as he did so.

‘I am empowered to offer—money,’ Geoffrey got out after a pause, hating the idea and himself for suggesting it all the time.

‘You heard what my colleague, “The Incorruptible,” said but now,’ said Danton, with a frown which brought his heavy eyebrows together, and giving a shake to the dishevelled hair which it gratified his vanity to

have thought like a lion's mane. 'We do not sell the children of the Nation—neither for English gold nor French. It is impossible !'

Geoffrey's heart stood still with fear as he looked at the ferocious countenance before him, and knew that the power of life and death was in those hands. But no trace of this inward shrinking was visible. His whole nature rose in revolt, and overmastered the sensation of fear. And somehow, as he stood there erect and calm, his fine appearance, and his firm though courteous bearing, appealed to the manhood of his hearer as neither fear, nor cringing, nor lying flattery would have done. He advanced a step, and, summoning all his strength, looked Danton in the face with his clear, resolute eyes, saying :

'Monsieur, I hear that you are all-powerful in the Assembly, and that you can slay or let live. I hear that some have asked mercy at your hand, and—have found it.

I, a foreigner, ask you now for mercy for a child (she is little more) who is my country-woman, and yours. Spare the young citoyenne De Boisfontaine. I will not fail to praise in my country the magnanimity which can wield power with one hand, and grant mercy with the other !

A cold dew, as of death, overspread Geoffrey's whole frame while he was speaking ; yet he kept a bold front as he watched the grim sardonic smile that flitted over the features of Danton during this impassioned speech. At this critical moment, as he watched, the powerful features relaxed.


‘A child, you say? A young girl, orphaned? It is true’ (referring again to the note-book). ‘The Republic, always just, has cut off the wicked career of certain aristocrats, plotters, scheming to bring foreign armies to our gates, and planning for the escape of Capet. But, while punishing traitors and cutting off enemies, the Republic, always generous, does not make

war with the young, with the children. Take your relative, then. And be warned, young man ; there are those who seek her death, foes of her household, unflinching in their endeavours. I give you this paper. Take her to England without loss of time. The girl has been sentenced, and reprieved. To-morrow, to-night—it may be even while we speak here—she will be accused again of further crimes not hitherto mentioned. I myself cannot stir to save her, if her name is again before the tribunal. She comes of a race of oppressors. No thanks, young English sir. If all be true that priests and women believe, I may have one troubled ghost the less to gibber round *my* death-bed.’ So speaking, he almost pushed Geoffrey out of the room, and down the stairs, saying, ‘Haste ! for her life !’

And Geoffrey, whose head swam, while his heart beat to suffocation, stumbled out into the fresh night air with the precious pardon in his hand.



CHAPTER LI.

HAT same night Antoinette de Boisfontaine lay down to sleep in her lonely cell, thankful always more and more for the privilege of being alone ; a circumstance which would have greatly aggravated the implacable Duclôt, through whom this—as he hoped miserable, but, to her, consolatory—isolation had been ordered. She had reached that stage of mental prostration when her sensations were paralyzed ; she did not sorrow any more ; she did not suffer ; she did not fear to die ; she did not know whether she wished to live ; she was content for either issue. She

dreaded only one thing, that was the sight of Jacques Duclôt, who had more than once visited the prison in his official capacity, and had not scrupled to gloat over her sorrows, and to intimidate her by threats and warnings which she received in silence.

She lay down this night, wrapping herself for warmth in the cloak which she had wrapped round her mother on the night when they were brought to the Maison St. Lazare. Her thin pale face, and the marks under her eyes, told sad tales of grief and suffering. But as she lay asleep in the cold moonlight, there was peace on her brow, and on the sweet curve of her lips an ineffable patience, which told of resignation and not of despair. ‘For so He giveth His beloved sleep.’

Few, indeed, in that prison slept such a sleep as hers. Feverish hope, despair, the agony of separations, these racked many a breast when night veiled the prisoners from each other’s eyes. In the daytime all was

different. Cards, fashionable games, rules of etiquette, minute refinements of dress and manners, occupied everyone with the punctilios of a bygone society. It was good-breeding to hide trouble, and the ghastly face of grief. It was good-breeding to be agreeable, to submit to fate, to continue that elegant persiflage, that witty talk, that frivolous but fascinating interchange of repartee, which made time pass so pleasantly. Was all this heroism? Was it the brave, bright spirit of ancestors, so renowned in their generations long ago, that was found again at need by their descendants, whom neither gaolers, imprisonment, nor the guillotine could cow? * Could it be philosophy—that philosophy which denied religion and a future beyond the grave, that enabled them to meet death so grandly? At least, we know that they who murdered them—the Héberts, Valazés, Robespierres, and those most guilty of the awful crimes of that

* See Note H at end of volume.

blood-stained era—did not die thus. Their cries, their suicides, their abject entreaties, their degradation in death, cannot be forgotten. We may draw our own conclusions on the matter. To-night within those dismal walls, Antoinette, as we have seen, slept peacefully under the very shadow of the fatal axe, not knowing how nearly it had been her last upon earth.

Suddenly her door was thrown open, and a lantern placed on the floor. Antoinette rose at once ; she had long expected the summons.

‘ One moment,’ she said, and bent reverently in prayer.

‘ Thou hadst better make haste,’ said her impatient guide. ‘ It will be too late, and thy life will be over anon. Come !’

Mechanically she followed down the stone staircase, gathering herself together as she went, fully expecting to encounter the dreaded Duclôt, and resolved to show no weakness before him. She was not a

moment too soon. It was dark. A waning cresset flickered in the vestibule, now giving, now hiding, its wretched light. There was a confused sound and movement in the prison-yard, and a buzz of voices—municipals, gendarmes, altogether a noisy posse of officials. Antoinette's conductor pushed her with more haste than kindness into a sort of little office-box, in which the prison-books and registers of names were kept.

‘Hide thy face, citoyenne, and keep in the shade, or thy head and mine will fall to-morrow.’

He took his lantern, and stood in front of the doorway as if to hide her. With much pomp of vulgar show and clatter of arms, the official visitors just arrived ascended the stairs, a grim and cruel train. So soon as they were safely passed, the turnkey who had brought Antoinette down hastily opened the wicket and called to some one outside.

‘Take your citoyenne,’ he said, ‘and don’t come sweeping floors, and spoiling my wife

for a sensible woman any more, thou ! My hands are clean. Never was there a finer escape. The patriot Duclôt and his band are but now gone up with the list. Her name was the first upon it. Give me the paper. Nothing but Citizen Danton's writing will avail me to save my head !

These words, spoken low and hurriedly, and the chink of money in the hand of the speaker, caused a strange flutter to rise in the breast of Antoinette. Her hand was taken by a woman's hand, and as she was hurried along beneath the dying lamp, she saw that it was Margot. There was no time for words. A hired carriage was waiting outside the gates. Some one lifted her with strong arms, and placed her gently in the farther corner. A voice said in English :

‘ Thank God, we are free ! She is saved !’


Free ! Saved ! It was Geoffrey Leigh who spoke, and his strong arm that was round her. Free ! the reaction was more

than she could bear; and Antoinette, so strong in trouble, was weak to bear this overpowering joy. She gave one sobbing sigh, and lay back silent and unconscious.





CHAPTER LII.

ACQUES DUCLÔT stood before the door of Antoinette's cell in all the glory of office, the death-list in his hand, and the name of the citoyenne Boisfontaine first upon it. He had worked, and lied, and plotted for this supreme moment, this crowning vengeance on the house of Boisfontaine. He had accused and sworn to death the father and the mother ; with his own hand had slain the brother ; and now he held in his dirty fingers the full and complete reward of all his villainy.

Antoinette was at length to die, and he

was to announce to her the fact. Surely there would be tears and weakness now ! She was, after all, but a slip of a girl ! She was altogether in his power—body and soul. He was a great man now ; all-powerful with still greater men, who refused him nothing. He would make her kneel and weep before him : and, when he had brought her to that, he would perjure her soul, by making her swear against the tyrant Capet and his family, as the price of his promise to set her free. And having sworn her to the lie, he would scoff at her credulity, and would follow her to the scaffold to mock and laugh at her there ! He had determined that, first on the list, she should be the last of that day's ' batch ' to die, that she might drink the cup of humiliation and misery to the dregs, and he be there to watch her ! All this he had rehearsed to himself, and revelled over with Dorine, until he realized it all beforehand.

He now stood at the door of his victim's

cell, feeling as some greedy epicure might do just before tasting the priceless dish, the crown of the feast, to which everything as yet has but led up.

In proportion to this expectant rapture, was its fall. The key was turned in the lock; the door was opened; and the cell was—empty!

With a countenance white with passion, his one eye glaring, his very hair bristling with rage, he turned upon the turnkey, and, without one word of utterance, felled him to the ground. The man lay prone for a moment, stunned, and then arose with vengeance in his heart. Duclôt then entered the cell, and searched it, as if those cold, bare walls could hide their captive from his clutches. There was only the bed where she had lain, sleeping so calmly not an hour ago, into which he savagely plunged his dagger. Lying on the table was a gold chain, and near it a little mother-of-pearl fan, painted by Watteau, a gem of art.

This he broke into fragments in his impotent rage. The chain he flung into a corner ; then snatched it up in his coarse hands, attracted, perhaps, by the workmanship, and turned to go.

The noise of the warder's fall, and other usual accompaniments of these nocturnal visits, had brought out several of the gentlemen and others among the prisoners, to hear the names read out. Duclôt's savage temper was not improved by the sight of these shadowy forms, hovering round in bedgowns and dressing-gowns ; some with undressed hair, some with silk nightcaps, their powder toupees covered, or their wigs laid aside ; all aristocratic, noble, antagonistic therefore to the full ; whose smiles and glances, and quips and elegant shrugs, were like the irritating stings of insects whom he could not crush. And when it was known that Mademoiselle de Boisfontaine, the beautiful, brave, and much-tried draughter of a family they all knew, had escaped, they no more

thought of concealing their satisfaction than they failed of treating the sans culottes who stood foiled before her empty cell with a haughty insouciance more galling than many blows. The sight of Danton's order, which the injured turnkey now hastened to display, was the final stroke. There is a point beyond which the power of evil cannot triumph, and the fortunes of Jacques Duclôt appeared to have reached that climax on which there is no resting, and to move from which is to fall.

Overbearing, hitherto not without his use in the economy of the Republic, but made reckless by power and the taste of blood, he lost the balance of caution by which his cunning brain had hitherto kept him upright on the precipice. He overshot his mark. The Republic found him troublesome. There was, as yet, in the mouths of its terrible chiefs, that shibboleth about Justice which had so fine a sound. For the King yet lived ; and there was a hollow formality, at least as to phrases, in the passing of judg-

ments, which afterwards, when the sword was worn without its sheath, wholly disappeared. Duclôt had got past the stage of decency already. He ran too fast ; it was not for him to take the lead. Judgment to him meant condemnation—slaughter. And one reason was as good as another, for that. There might be no public reason why Antoinette de Boisfontaine should die ; but there were abundant private ones. He, a virtuous patriot, must not demand his special victim in vain ! If he did call it vengeance, what then ? What else but vengeance—a Nation's vengeance—would the death of Capet himself be ! That was to be the next great work of the Republic ; he knew all about it ; about the trial that was coming on, and the foreknown verdict, too. To the Assembly, then, he went, with all the pettish fury of a spoiled child whose toy has been snatched away from it. Also with all the virtuous wrath of a good patriot who is grieved for the miscarriage of justice.

Forcing his way rudely to the tribune, and jostling no less a personage than Marat as he did so, in the blindness of his rage he began :

‘Citizens ! I am Duclôt ! You know me ! I am patriot, and brother of patriots—enemy of all aristocrats and foes of the Republic. I have denounced—I have again, for the third time, denounced Antoinette de Boisfontaine, covered with crimes and intrigues. What, then ! One of you—one of us—has defeated justice, and taken gold ! Yes, English gold—Pitt’s gold !’ snarled Duclôt, foaming at the mouth. ‘She has been rescued—released—and by one of you !’ he cried, lost to all outward decency or appearance of respect for the powerful body before whom he raved. ‘Yes ; she has escaped from her very cell, this devil in human shape ! By her arts and her wiles she has corrupted The Incorruptible. And, worse, by her gold she has—she has—— There he stands !’ suddenly cried

the madman, beside himself, and blinded. 'Danton is the man! It was his name! I saw it! He has set her free! She has fled to the émigrés to bring the armies upon us!'

'This man tires me,' said Danton to his colleagues. 'I will have no more of him.'

He signed to a guard standing by; and, before Duclôt could resist, he was seized by the collar, whirled off his feet, and deposited among the crowd below. Before he could recover his breath, Danton himself, powerful and pitiless, with the voice and the port of a lion, ascended the tribune from which Duclôt had been ousted. The contrast struck even him. There, indeed, was power. A perfect silence fell upon the Assembly.

'Brothers,' said Danton, 'the Nation we know is just. It punishes wickedness in high places' (vivas). 'But it protects the young, the orphans, the mothers of a new generation. It is generous to the children, even while it strikes the parents' (loud vivas,

and tears of admiration from citoyennes in the audience). ‘Robbery, persecution, and revenge the Nation abjures. That man’ (pointing to him) ‘is a robber. Place on the comptoir’ (addressing the gendarmes) ‘the contents of that robber’s pockets. He is a vengeur—one who denounces in wrath—not one who informs for the public good. What do such brigands deserve at the hands of a virtuous people?’

There was a pause—an ominous silence. Duclôt, pallid to the finger-tips, and now thoroughly aware of his danger, cast a despairing glance at the faces of the judges. He there read his sentence. With a loud cry of horror and dismay he fell, imploring, supplicating, crawling, grovelling to the ground on hands and knees before Danton, whining of his virtues, shrieking for mercy, and descending to the abject extreme of craven fear.

‘This is enough!’ cried Danton; and, taking his cue, the judge rose, holding in

his hand the gold chain which had been taken, with some other trifles, from Duclôt's trembling grasp.

‘The Republic condemns such roguery,’ he said. ‘Her servants must be pure. Take him away!’

No sooner were these words spoken than the Nation, by the hand of its executive, dragged the wretch to his feet. In vain he protested, implored, yelled for mercy.

Outside the hall a crowd of savages, prowling and thronging about, caught up the threats of the gendarmes, who, unused to any such resistance from the general run of victims, were now obliged to wrestle for the mastery with the iron sinews of Duclôt.

‘Thief! Villain! Robber of the Nation! The guillotine is too good for him!’ roared the crowd.

‘A suspect! A suspect!’ cried a voice he knew—a woman’s voice. ‘Armand! this for Armand!’ as she struck him.

‘A la lanterne !’ was the cry.

But he never reached either lanterne or guillotine. The tiger multitude, athirst for blood, seized the shrieking wretch, whirled him out of the grasp of the soldiers, and tore him limb from limb.





CHAPTER LIII.



WHEN Antoinette awoke to consciousness, instead of being on her prison-bed, with the grimy, thick glass window opposite, which always seemed to withhold the daylight as long as it could so as to be in keeping with the spirit of the place, she found herself lying in the cabin of a boat, with Margot sitting beside her—with what sensations of thankfulness it is impossible to say. From apathy to joy—from death to life—the leap is tremendous enough to threaten a recoil. The mind seems unable to stand firm under a strain so great.

Antoinette could not speak. She lay quite still with her hand in Margot's. No sound broke the stillness but the occasional creaking of the rudder and the ripple of the water as it lapped on the sides of the boat. She could not even think at first. The day dawned and reached its noon, and night came. Margot slept, but it was not until the gray morning of that second day that Antoinette, exhausted in mind and body, sank into slumber, a slumber so deep that it was hours before she awoke, with a startled, terrified look on her face ; but seeing Margot watching near her, she gave a long deep sigh. 'It was not, then, a dream?' The blessed tears came welling to her eyes, and she wept without restraint. Margot had no want of ready wit. She had a delicious mess of her own concocting simmering on a charcoal fire outside, and before Antoinette had found her absent, she was standing near with it in her hand, quite convinced in her own mind that this poor

wan mistress of hers must be fainting for want of food. Having watched her with much interest for some moments, Margot said :

‘ There is some one asking for mademoiselle.’

‘ For me ? Where are we, and whither are we going, Margot ?’

‘ We go to England—to mademoiselle’s so much loved England. And the good monsieur who has brought us on the way longs only to see mademoiselle, and to present himself before her. He waits the pleasure of mademoiselle.’

‘ Margot,’ said Antoinette, starting up from her pillow, and then sinking back as unable to bear the excitement of the interview, ‘ tell this so kind and good friend that I will see him to-morrow, if he will have patience until then ? Or stay, I have no right to reward his goodness with what he may think ingratitude. Ask him to wait until evening—this evening I will see him.’

Margot, whose face had fallen considerably at the word 'to-morrow,' now brightened up, and went to do her bidding, and Antoinette lay, feeling like one emerging from a long illness, lazily watching the green banks, and the trees now shedding their leaves, and the changing river-course, as if she could hardly bear to break the charmed rest, so delicious from its contrast.

At length the autumn day drew to its close. Margot lit a little dingy lamp which swung from the cabin-rafters, and made what seemly preparation she best could for the reception of the visitor.

A low knock at the door announced his presence.

'Remain here, Margot,' said Antoinette, which Margot interpreted in her own way.

And so he entered. He, too, looked worn and ill; he, too, had been scathed by the terrible lightning of the storm which they had left behind them, raging over the devoted city.

Antoinette received him almost in silence. She had little strength to battle with tears and emotion. And there was present, at least in her mind, the remembrance of one whom she regarded with high admiration and respect, whose affianced wife she was, and who, she well knew, would claim her at the earliest opportunity that it should be possible for him to do so ; in fact, whom she had every confidence might now be awaiting in England the tidings of her escape.

Her quietness and the sweet calm of her manner put Geoffrey at his ease. He told her exactly the circumstances in which they were placed. He had been able to hire the boat—a poor, mean vessel enough—on his arrival in Paris, and he had taken the precaution to engage it and to pay the owner, and keep him in his service in case of need. The man was a fisher of Havre, and to Havre they were going.

‘ He has an aunt or some relation, he

tells me, who is a good woman, one of the religieuses who have now no cloister, but who is a true nun, nevertheless, keeping to her vows and doing all the good she can ; tending the sick, helping refugees (which she has done more than once to his knowledge), and aiding them to fly the country. Her house is near the sea and the harbour. This should suit us well, and I pray that we may find it true. I will then at once look for a vessel bound for some English port, and we may hope everything.'

Geoffrey did not stay long. He broached no exciting topics, and confined himself to the barest mention of the practical details of his plan ; he was too chivalrous and too full of pity for the poor girl who sat propped up with cushions, so sadly altered, the wreck of her former self, and who spoke in a voice so exhausted that it was all he could do to catch the few words she spoke. And he had his reward. As he rose to go she put her hand into his, and said :

‘You will come again to-morrow, Sir Geoffrey?’

The prefix hurt him, but he would not show it.

‘I fear you are ill?’ he said.

‘Not ill,’ she answered, with a wan smile, ‘only tired. It was the burthen—the strain—the—— But I am already better. To-morrow I shall be well, and able to do all you advise. And I will try to—to thank you.’

Her voice faltered ; Geoffrey could hardly bear to leave her. But Margot, whisking in at the doorway at this moment, beckoned him to go, and he obeyed.





CHAPTER LIV.

PEACE and rest are wonderful restoratives. The next day youth and hope began to reassert their power over Antoinette. Life seemed once more a gift to be desired. The thought of England, and the welcome which would greet her there, seemed to beckon her across the sea.

Geoffrey was charmed and inspirited to observe the change. He knew well that she might have need of all her nerve; that they were not yet safe. He could not feel that all danger was over until they should

again touch the soil of his native land. The boatman might be false—the aunt a myth or a snare. Even money might fail to buy their lives, which he felt were completely at the mercy of these people, one of whom they had never seen.

At last the boat was anchored in a quiet part of the harbour, and it was time for them to land. It was evening, and the dusk and a thick sea-mist were favourable. It was decided that instead of Geoffrey landing alone with the boatman, as was first proposed, they should all leave the old barge together, and that they should follow him to the house of the good nun. Their guide soon stopped at the door of a building close to the harbour. There were no lights nor any external signs of life about it. The main entrance faced into a narrow dirty lane, and their boatman told him to wait there whilst he went round and gave notice of their arrival. It was not a pleasant moment for Geoffrey. Alone he would have

thought nothing of such an adventure ; but he could not but feel a keen anxiety as to what sort of a reception was in store for them in this uncouth place. Shortly, however, the bolts and lock were unfastened with as little noise and as much haste as their rustiness permitted, and instantly closed behind them, as they were drawn inside with all convenient speed. By the light of a dim candle they could see that they stood within a long stone passage, which seemed to stretch its uncomfortable vista into space unfathomable. When they could see before them, they perceived their guide, the fisherman, standing by the side of a tall, grave woman, whose face, worn by age and trouble, had yet a peaceful expression upon it, and whose eyes were bent sadly but not unkindly upon them.

‘Enter,’ she said, and opened a door close by. It was the kitchen of the house ; and though bare enough, was exquisitely clean. On the hearth burned a wood-fire,

the warmth of which was welcome indeed after the chill fog outside.

Madame Dupont had heard from her nephew that these unknown visitors were bound for England. Many, she said, came to Havre to cross the sea : and so far things had gone well with her in devoting herself to those unfortunates. She had no fears ; she had long ago given her life in this world into the hands of the Master whom she served. But it was impossible to deny that things became more difficult every day : and all she implored for their own sakes, and for the sake of those who might yet come to claim her aid, was, that they would hasten their going. Meanwhile they were welcome to all she had, and all she and hers could do for them—in the Holy Name.

Madame Dupont kept no servant. She had devoted herself to the help of those in trouble, and she knew that the fewer who shared their secrets, the better. She

beckoned Margot to follow her, and showed her a little room half-way down the long dark passage, where she and Antoinette might safely snatch what rest they could; and leaving the young girl to arrange it as best she might for their comfort, returned to cook some fresh fish and an omelette for her hungry guests.

Geoffrey Leigh had announced his intention of going out in search of a vessel, on board of which they might take passage for England; and taking the fisherman with him, they set forth with all convenient speed, Geoffrey entreating Antoinette to take some repose meanwhile, as they might have to sail before daybreak. Having now arranged things as much as possible for her lady's comfort, Margot, whose mercurial temperament caused her to float like a sea-bird on the tide of these troubled waters, returned to give their hostess the benefit of her sharp wits and nimble fingers. Moreover, her tongue could on occasion prove

equally nimble. And the good nun's very hair stood on end as Margot told her of the terrible sorrows through which mademoiselle had passed : and how, since father, mother, brother, and uncle were all slain, her only remaining relative now was in England. Also of the horrors that were being done in Paris, and of the scenes she herself had witnessed, whilst, for mademoiselle's sake, she had served the turnkey's wife at the prison of St. Lazare.

‘Thou art a good girl, Margot,’ said the sympathetic religieuse. ‘I thank the Master whom I serve that He has granted me to help one of His wounded and suffering ones ! See, I will also have thee go now and take thy share of rest ; and take with thee this jug of sweet new milk. I should have given half anyhow, but when I think of her wan face, and of all she has gone through, I give thee all. Nay, it was not for myself that I withheld it—I need it not. It was—it was for——’

‘For thy good Martin, our guide?’ said Margot, supplying the rest of the sentence. ‘Keep it. He has been good to us.’

‘For Martin?’ said the religieuse, with a smile. ‘Nay, I treat him not thus. It was for—— Listen, Margot—I will trust thee. Thou hast known trouble, and I am truly at this moment at my very wits’ end. I am penetrated with pity—and oh! it is a piteous case; as for me, I know not what to do!’ Then, beckoning Margot to her side, and bending over her knitting, speaking very low, she said: ‘Know, that in the room above these rafters a man is lying—sick, I much fear me, to the death. My Martin brought him hither. Never can I forget his face as I first saw it. It was as the face of the dead. No colour in cheeks or lips—one ashen-gray over all. I thought he was dead, and yet he stood there on my hearth and asked for shelter. His hair was streaked with white; his eyes had

no lustre, and stared out astonished, wild !
What must he not have seen and suffered ?

The eyes of the speaker shone with the divinest pity as she spoke, and looked into Margot's, which were glancing eagerly through tears.

‘ I am not deceived,’ she continued. His torn, stained apparel was not such as the people wear. He is above his appearance. Ah, I have seen—and I know all this ! Well, I have hidden him six weeks, not less, perhaps more—I do not count the days. Each new sunrise he desired to cross the sea to England, or to get passage from France at least. But at first there were hindrances. He had lost all. Then fever came upon him. He could not walk, he could not stand : he could not think, he could not rise. One after another these things befell. He has no one but me to look to. Doubtless he has been sorely tried in yonder furnace, and I fear he cannot live in safety here much longer. The

municipals pay domiciliary visits even here, and will be more strict as time goes on. I am known to be a religieuse, and am therefore “suspect”; for we of my order, who keep our vows, must help the suffering. It is upon us. If the good God pleases, He will deliver this poor man, and me who shelter him; but every day I know that the tide is against us, and it rises. Come and see. He sleeps, he will not know. Whether that sleep be weakness or woe, it seems at times as if it must end in death.’

So Margot, nothing loath, followed her into the upper room. There, upon a pallet, was stretched a man, worn, and thin, and changed indeed; but Margot’s quick eyes recognised the face of one who had come an honoured guest to Boisfontaine—come, as all the world knew, to be betrothed to made-moiselle, and whom, for that reason, Margot had determined to see, and had seen. His eyes were closed, and he seemed to breathe with difficulty. Margot stood there petrified;

her busy brain took in the whole situation. What ought she to do ? tell mademoiselle ? keep silence ? No : not that last. She said not one word, but leaving the startled religieuse to wonder, flew down to her mistress.

‘ Mademoiselle !’ she cried, ‘ there is some one here besides us—some one whom we have known so different ; ill, mademoiselle ! Without help—poor !’

‘ Who, then ?’ said Antoinette, trembling and starting up. She was thinking of those whom she had lost ; but that idea was gone as soon as imagined. She heard and understood : at once her brave true spirit rose to the occasion.

‘ Lead me to him,’ she said, and followed Margot up the creaking stairs.

When the door was opened and she saw the truth, a great and overwhelming pity filled her heart. She approached the bed, and by the light of the dismal rushlight, which stood on a table near, she looked on him

from whom she had last parted so differently. His face was colourless absolutely, as if the blood had once retreated from it and had never flowed back again ; not blanched as from illness, but gray to the lips ; and his hair was white like that of an old man. The hands, which had wielded the sword in more than one contested field, lay nerveless and wasted on the patched coverlet of the bed. She went near and bent over him.

‘ De Vezécque—Roland ? ’ she said in a low trembling voice, greatly moved.

The eyes opened ; a startled, anxious expression in them showed that life and consciousness were still there. He looked at her, and as he looked a smile of unutterable gladness shone out. She took his poor wasted hand in hers, and, kneeling by him, said :

‘ I have come to help you and to watch over you ; to repay a little of what I owe to you—to you, who have done so much for me.’

As the light of a dying lamp is revived

by the pouring in of fresh oil, so life returned to the veins of the dying Marquis. In detached sentences he told her of his arrest and imprisonment, and of the miraculous escape with life from under the very hand of the executioner. As he spoke, the vivacious French temperament seemed to awake in him like a renewal of existence; he endeavoured to raise himself, and urged her to tell him how it was that she was here, and what she proposed to do, as it must be impossible to remain much longer with any hope of safety.

In as few words as possible she told him how Margot had found her, and been allowed to see her in the prison; how Sir Geoffrey Leigh had gained her release from Danton himself; and how, with these two companions, she was on her way to England to the protection of the only relative she had now left alive, her mother's half-sister.

‘To whose hospitality,’ she said, ‘as you will remember, we had determined to commit

ourselves on that disastrous day when we were separated.'

'Ah, yes!' said the Marquis, 'and remembering that, I, too, was bound from hence to England, that generous country which has drawn so many of us wounded into her bosom in the hour of need. I thought if we were to meet, it would be there—ah, yes: there! But now——'

He paused, overcome with emotion; and, as he did so, Antoinette became aware that Geoffrey Leigh was standing on the threshold. She beckoned him to come near.

'It is Monsieur de Vezécque,' she said. 'It is my——' she hesitated a moment, looking at Geoffrey, and from him to De Vezécque, who still held her hand in a grasp that seemed as if in life it never would yield again this new-found treasure to friend or foe—'my betrothed husband.'

The strange unearthly face, the brilliant eyes in which fever rather than vitality were shining, the helpless form, the quick-coming

breath — Geoffrey beheld them all, and knew that his dreaded rival was at the extreme of human life. Yet it was possible that hope, and relief of mind, and care might restore him. Geoffrey's generous nature, too noble to harbour any *arrière pensée*, asserted itself now. Looking towards Antoinette, as if he would say, 'Your wishes are also my wishes,' he stooped towards the sick man, and said :

'Sir, though we have not met, you are well known to me. Your fame is in my country, as well as in the New World. I have been so fortunate as to secure passages in a ship that sails for England at daybreak. Come with us, then ; share my home as an honoured guest. In a few short hours we shall be safe beyond these dangers, and in England you will find a welcome from those who will devote themselves to your recovery.'

Antoinette listened. Never had Geoffrey seemed so noble in her eyes. She looked up

with pride and admiration on her pale face, and he saw that he had satisfied her.

After a hasty consultation, and by the help of the kind old nun, such preparation was made for De Vezécque's being carried to the ship as time and his extreme weakness allowed. And Geoffrey, and Martin the fisherman, carried him on board the *Saucy Peggy*, with all the care that pity and kindness could bestow, their hostess going down with them to the wharf to give her help. It was long before she would take anything in the way of payment, until Antoinette reminded her of the comforts it would enable her to get for others who might come to her in similar case.

At length the vessel was under weigh, the shore retreated, unhappy France was left behind, and they were bound for England.

Geoffrey and Antoinette were never absent long from the cabin where De Vezécque lay, and the first hours of their voyage were rough and unfavourable. His

one longing seemed to be, to be carried on deck. And Geoffrey determined that at the first practicable moment he should be gratified.

The last day they were to spend on board was one of those soft, misty, dreamy days which come in the late autumn so often between storms. The air was balmy, the sea like glass; all sails were spread to take advantage of every passing breeze, and an hour before sunset they brought the sick man on the deck of the little vessel according to his wish. He had been in no state to adventure upon such a voyage. Only all-compelling circumstances had made such a thing possible, and a natural buoyancy of mind, with the power of enduring hardships which a soldier's life had given him, alone could have brought him thus far. Antoinette, after the first shock of seeing him, had not noticed any change. But to all other eyes it was patent. And there was not a man in all the rough sea crew that did

not bend compassionate glances on one so sorely tried, and use what skill and power they had to carry the ship across, while yet he lived ; hoping that he might yet reach the shore, and find another chance of life in another land.

But no such chance was to be for De Vezécque.

As he lay there, with Antoinette beside him, he himself knew that the end had come. The sun, just at its setting, had broken gloriously from out the gathering mist, turning the smooth waters into a shining sea, tingeing the ship, and all its sails and masts and ropes, with the glow of sunset splendour.

‘ Take care of her,’ he said to Geoffrey ; ‘ she is an angel ! God help my country ! ’

These were his last words. His eyes closed, and, as they bent over him, he gave one long last sigh ; and, noble and unselfish to the last, the soul of Roland, Marquis de Vezécque, had left this troublesome

world for that other, where they who have striven for the right, amidst all bewilderment and contradiction, will find the threads of suffering life, that seemed so tangled here, turned to gold, and woven into a garment of light meet to be worn in the Master's presence.





CHAPTER LV.



NCE again we must transport our readers to the Manor House at Leigh.

It was late in the evening of a stormy autumn day, in the year 1792, and a lady in deep mourning paced the rooms, as she anxiously awaited the arrival of travellers returning from France. But the household and its surroundings were changed. The beautiful old grandmother had left her painting and her earthly flowers for the unfading blooms of Paradise. Sir Geoffrey Leigh, the husband, father, benefactor, and friend of all the country-side, had been taken away,

too. It was the present Sir Geoffrey's mother, the beloved Aunt Marguerite of Antoinette de Boisfontaine's childhood, who now waited and watched for the return of those so dear to her. Miss Wilkins, the faithful and devoted, was hovering in the background. She had been relating, for at least the hundredth time since its occurrence, a dream she had once had about a stormy sea, in which the present Sir Geoffrey had been calmly swimming about endeavouring to reach what Miss Wilkins had imagined to be a sea-bird, poised on the top of a terrible wave, but which had proved to be the form of a young girl. Just as he had caught her, as it were, by the very outermost fold of her clothing, Miss Wilkins had screamed herself awake !

‘ And here they come ! ’ she exclaimed in excitement, as the sound of wheels came up the avenue.

The carriage approached ; it stopped. The great door was thrown wide open. Yes, it

was Geoffrey Leigh himself. And he bore in his arms, out of the wind and rain of the outer storm into the warmth and brightness of his home, a pale wan form, bent and drooping from exhaustion. It was the same Antoinette who in her childish days long since had nestled there for shelter—and found happiness and peace.





NOTES.

NOTE A

DR. CABANIS' poison. This was composed of datura with stramonium and opium of the best quality. It appears to have been made up as a lozenge, or sometimes as a little brown-coloured ball or pill. The proper dose was written on the label wrapped round it. Buguot mentions that he carried one about with him whilst in the revolutionary prison, and, but for a solemn promise to his wife not to use it except in the last extremity, he was more than once tempted to escape from his misery by its means. The Marquis de Condorcet, Girondist and scientist, was found dead in his prison from the effects of this deadly drug, and by means of it Loménie de Brienne, Archbishop of Toulouse, and afterwards of Sens, and minister, avoided the scaffold.

NOTE B.

It is a fact beyond dispute that Danton, Robespierre and Marat with Tallien, together planned the September murders in the most deliberate way, and in all their details. It is also on record that a few days before these terrible massacres, Danton had carefully arranged for the interment of the in-

tended victims. He sent an assignat of the nominal value of £100 to the sexton of St. Sulpice, with orders to prepare an enormous fosse or excavation at Montrouge, as a burial-place. Ten cartloads of corpses were taken there for burial.

NOTE C.

Under Hébert, who sat as judge at La Force, on Sunday, September 2, 1792, 167 prisoners, including the Princess de Lamballe, were slaughtered in that prison alone. The two Communists who ordered the murder of the beautiful and innocent Madame de Lamballe were Hébert (Père Duchesne) and Lhuillier, members of the Jacobin Club. Hébert was executed March 24, 1794.

NOTE D.

The incident here related is a fact, and the friend who told it to the writer of this story vouches for its truth. Those hours of terrible suspense and mental suffering appear to have left indelible marks on the victim. His complexion became not pale, but '*ashen gray*,' and never recovered the slightest hue of colour or health during his lifetime.

NOTE E.

'Sleep in the prisons was broken by the rattling of chains and unbarring of doors. And often the executioners burst in at night on purpose to alarm the prisoners. By this infernal device the death-warrants for eighty persons were made the means of keeping six hundred in suspense.'—*Beugnot*.

NOTE F.

There was at no time of the Revolutionary excesses much difficulty in making a path to the scaffold out of slight pretexts, such as fidelity or affection, like that of the boune in our story. But after the execution of the three royal prisoners matters were worse than before that time. The idea was to destroy, and all ranks contributed to swell the ghastly and never-ending procession to the guillotine. Amongst many

other such, an instance which Macfarlane mentions may be given here :

Monsieur de Gamache was brought into Court. The officer even declared him not to be the person accused.

‘Never mind,’ said Fouquier Tinville ; ‘he will do just as well.’

The real Gamache, however, was also forthcoming, and duly appeared. Both were executed.

NOTE G.

Such instances as this were not wanting to add both pathos and horror to the time. Madame de Rozambre (daughter of Malesherbe) lost her reason through grief at her husband’s death, and went to prison and to the scaffold unconscious of everything.

NOTE H

Laharpe gives the following ‘prophecy’ of the French Revolution, which he says that he himself heard from the lips of the well-known writer, Cazotte, in the year 1788.

This is how Laharpe himself describes the whole circumstance :

‘It appears to me as though it had happened but yesterday, and yet the incident took place in the year 1788.

‘We were sitting at table, principally members of the Academy, with one of our colleagues. The company was numerous ; it consisted of courtiers, men of letters, and others. We partook of a superb dinner. At the dessert the Malvoisie and Cape wines had elevated the gaiety of the company. . . . Chamfort had read to us some of his graceless tales. . . . Many impious jests were launched against religion. One read passages from Voltaire’s “Pucelle,” amidst universal plaudits. One admitted the revolution which Voltaire had effected in the empire of the sciences : “That great man,” he said, “gave the tone to his age. He is read as generally in every ante-chamber, as in the superb apartments of our most

illustrious men." One of the guests related with a hearty laugh that his hair-dresser had said to him . . .

"Look you, sir, though I am but a poor fellow, I concern myself as little about religion as the grandest of you gentlemen!"

"It was the general opinion that a political revolution would soon arrive, and that "fanaticism" must give way to the philosophic spirit of the times. They wished happiness to those whose age still allowed them to cherish the hope of witnessing this great work.

"Only one individual of the party appeared to withhold his applause from our conversation. This was Cazotte, an eccentric but amiable man. At length he broke silence, and said, with the utmost gravity :

"Make yourselves easy, gentlemen, you will live to see this great and sublime Revolution which you so anxiously desire. Yes, I repeat, you will live to see it."

"That may be," said one of the company ; "a man need not be a wizard to foretell anything of that sort."

"Agreed ; but it requires more than a common head to know what is to follow. Do you know what will be the consequences of this Revolution, and what will become of all of you during it ?"

"Well, let us hear, then !" said Condorcet, with a sarcastic smile.

"You, M. de Condorcet, will die in prison, and by poison, which you will take to escape the hand of the executioner. So great will be the happiness of this revolutionary era, that people will carry their dose constantly in their pocket !"*

"The whole table was convulsed with laughter.

"M. Cazotte," said one of the guests, "this story which you have been telling is not near so pleasing as your '*Diable Amoureux*'" (an uncommonly entertaining novel by M.

* The Marquis de Condorcet died in prison by taking one of Cabanis' lozenges, rather than face the scaffold.

Cazotte). "But how do you come by prisons, and poisons, and executioners? What have these to do with reason and philosophy?"

"'Tis in the very name of philosophy," answered Cazotte, "in the very name of liberty and humanity, that reason will rule in the manner that I predict. It will be the express reign of Reason; for to her alone will altars be erected throughout all France, and the other temples will be shut up."

"Upon my soul!" interrupted Chamfort, bursting into a contemptuous laugh, "you, Cazotte, will be one of the priests that will perform the worship of Reason?"

"I hope not. But you, M. de Chamfort, will be one of the most worthy; for you will open your veins with a razor, but you will not die till several months afterwards."

The company looked at each other, and the laughter became still louder.

"You, M. de Vieu d'Azir, will open six veins one after another in a fit of the gout, and die the same night. As for you, MM. de Nichôllai, Bailly, and Malesherbes, you will all three die on the scaffold."

"Thank God!" cried Rocher. "It appears as if the speaker was determined to wreak all his vengeance on the Academy: he has despatched Academicians in a terrible way. But I am not one of their number; he will surely be merciful to me."

"You? No; you, too, like the others, will expire on the scaffold."

"He must have conspired," was now the universal cry, "to exterminate us altogether."

"No, I have not."

"Are we, then, to be conquered by the Turks and Tartars? and——"

"By no means. As I have already said, you will then live under the sway of reason and philosophy alone. Those of whom you may expect such treatment are nothing but

philosophers, who, like yourselves, will have nothing in their mouths but reason and philosophy."

"The company now whispered each other, "It is plain that he is a perfect fool: he always strives to appear eccentric in his jokes."

"That may be," said Chamfort; "but this humorist should be more cheerful: his stories smell too strongly of the gallows. But tell me, Cazotte, when are all these things to happen?"

"Scarcely six years will have elapsed before all that I predict will be accomplished."

"That is wonderful!" exclaimed I (Laharpe); "and am I then to make no figure in all these scenes?"

"You, sir, are destined for one of their most extraordinary wonders. You will become a Christian."

The room shook with violent and universal peals of laughter.

"Well," cried Chamfort, "I am easy, if we are not to be despatched till Laharpe has become a Christian. At that rate we shall never die!"

"We women come off the best," observed the Duchesse de Grammont, "as we pass for nothing at all in this Revolution. I mean not to say that we shall have no hand in it, but it is admitted that our sex——"

"Your sex, madame, will not in this case protect you. It will avail you nothing that you refrain from intermeddling: you will be treated without distinction like us men."

"What say you, M. Cazotte? That must certainly be the end of the world!"

"That I know not; but this I know perfectly well, that you, Madame la Duchesse, will be conveyed in the executioner's cart, in company with many other ladies, with your hands tied behind your backs."

"At any rate, then," said the Duchesse, "I shall be allowed a carriage covered with black cloth?"

"No, madame; ladies of still higher rank than yourself

will be drawn in a cart with their hands tied behind them."

"Ladies of higher rank ! Who can they be ?"

"The princesses of the blood royal, of still higher rank than——"

Here the company was in visible emotion. A deep gloom overspread the countenance of the master of the house, and they felt that the joke had been carried too far. Madame de Grammont, in order to bring back the conversation to a more agreeable tone, contented herself with observing :

"They will, however, let me have a confessor ?"

"No, madame. Nobody will have any. The last condemned person to whom that will be allowed as a favour will be"—he paused for a moment—"will be the King of France."

The host rose abruptly from the table, and his example was followed by all his guests. He went up to M. Cazotte, whom he addressed in a pathetic tone :

"Dear Cazotte," said he, "your gloomy fancies have lasted too long. You go too far. You might commit yourself and the whole company !"

Cazotte took his hat, and was about to retire without saying a word. Madame de Grammont, who always avoided anything like gravity, detained him, saying :

"Dear Mr. Prophet, we have listened long enough to your prophecies about us ; but you have not said a word about yourself."

Cazotte paused : his eyes were bedimmed with tears.

"Have you, madame, ever read the 'Siege of Jerusalem,' by the historian Josephus ?"

"Undoubtedly ; who is there but has ? But continue as though I had not."

"Well, then, madame, during this siege a man went for seven successive days round the ramparts of the city in the face of the besieging Romans, and of the besieged Jews, incessantly crying with a voice of thunder, 'Woe to Jerusalem !'

On the seventh day he exclaimed, 'Woe to Jerusalem ! Woe to myself !' At the same moment a prodigious stone discharged by the enemy's machines dashed him into a thousand pieces."

'After this answer Cazotte bowed and withdrew.'

Those who are most conversant with the history of the Revolution and its victims, will remember the fate of Nichôllai, of the learned and venerable Bailly, of Malesherbes, of the Duchesse de Grammont, and others of that gay and gifted company. They will also remember how Laharpe himself, escaping the atrocities which proved fatal to so many of his friends and colleagues, lived to abjure the reign of Reason and philosophy as the source of these evil days, and to embrace the Christian faith.

THE END.

